سُعَاد الصَبَاح

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دراسات نقدية بالعربية والانجليزية




د. نذير العظمة
د. صلاح صالح
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بأقلام

د. نذير العظمة ، د. صلاح صالح

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## كلمة الناشر

هذا الكتاب الذي نضعه بين ايدي القراء يضم، في قسميه العربي والأنكليزي، بعض ما سجلته أقلام نقاد بارزين في درسهم نتاج الشاعرة العربية الدكتورة سعاد الصباح. وهو هنا يتناول، تحديداً، مجموعتها «قصائد حب» التي هي أول مجموعة للدكتورة الصباح تندرج، كعمل كامل، في نطاق ما اصطلح على تسميته «قصيدة النثر الحديثة».

وإذ نلاحظ في هذه المجموعة ما يصح وصفه، قياساً بنتاجها السابق عامة، بأنه تنويع بارز في الشكل التعبيري، وهو هنا يعني رفضاً للانغلاق داخل انماط مألوفة واعتبارها على، جدة بعضها نسبياً، اشكال تعبير نهائية، فلا بد من ربط الأمر بمسيرة الشاعرة منذ بدايات نتاجها، وذلك من ناحيتي المحتوى الفكري والشكل التعبيري. فالشاعرة الثائرة الداعية الى التغيير والتي عرفت بالتمرد على سكونية الحياة العربية وبعض قوالبها الاجتماعية والفكرية التي تجعل الانسان، والمرأة في صورة خاصة، أشبه بسجين مقيد، لا يتوقع منها أن تحصر تجاربها وحالاتها الشعورية بكل تفجرها وتدفقها وعمقها، في نمط واحد أو أنماط محددة ونهائية.

وربما كان خير دليل على هذا أن الدكتورة الصباح رافقت ما شهده الشعر العربي الحديث من تطور في البحث عن أشكال تعبير متجددة، فقد كتبت قصائد عمودية وشعراً حديثاً متعدد القوافي والأوزان، وقصيدة النثر كما يظهر جلياً في هذه المجموعة.

كثير من السمات التي تحدث عنها هؤلاء النقاد من خلال مجموعة «قصائد حب» ينطبق في أحيان كثيرة على المراحل المختلفة لدى الشاعرة أي على مجموع نتاجها خاصة من حيث المحتوى الفكري والقضايا الانسانية التي شغلتها .

من هذه السمات القول: إن الكتابة عندها هي «إعلان استقلالها والاعتراف الذاتي بهويتها» ، وإن العشق في المجموعة المكرسة للحب ليس شأناً جسدياً لكنه «صهيل من أجل الحرية» . والشاعرة تكافح من أجل شراكة انسانية بقيم الحب والحرية والمساواة متحدية «لغة الثقافة المعلبة ومواقفها الجاهزة» . وموضوع هذه المجموعة «هو الحب بوصفه الوسيلة الوحيدة أمام البشرية لمقاومة الفناء وليس الشهوة . فكل تعبير فني جديد عن الحب هو اسهام جديد في بناء ثقافة الانسان واسهام في تعميق انسانيته» . وفي مجموعة «قصائد حب» نقرأ سعي العواطف «الانثوية الفائرة لتأسيس خطاب الحب الانثوي في الشعر العربي» .

ومما وصفت به الشاعرة هنا انها «ذات قدرة على تحويل مفردات العيش اليومي وتفاصيله الكثيرة إلى طاقة شعرية ومكمن عطر يكتظ بالجاذبية ويفيض بالعذوبة والجمال . . . وقصائدها ذات قدرة على خرق حدود المألوف» .

# سعاد الصباح وتجلّيات الحب

د . نذير العظمة

هل تتهيب سعاد الصباح كسر المحرم في ممارسة حقها الطبيعي كأنثى بمعاناة عاطفة الحب والتعبير عنها تعبيراً قوياً كما يفعل أي شاعر منذ الأمس القديم حتى اليوم.

ماذا تريد الشاعرة سعاد الصباح حرية الذات أم حرية الجسد أم حرية كل منهما معاً؟ !

وماذا يمثل الآخر الذكر لهذه الذات الأنثى الشاعرة وماذا يعني الحب؟. وماذا تعني الحرية لها وماذا تعني الكلمة؟.

هل الحب لديها نزعة إيروسية جامحة تتطلب تواصل جسد بجسد بدافع الشبق والشهوة أم الحب غريزة حضارية تقتضي وحدة روحين في لحمة واحدة تضم الذات الواحدة في شقيها المؤنث والمذكر.

ومن هو الآخر الذي تسبغ عليه سعاد الصباح عواطف الحب ومشاعره الخفية رجل الحريم عنوان الحضارات القديمة أم إنسان الحضارة الذي يشعرها بوجودها وحضورها المستلبين. وما موقع الكلمة من ذلك كله؟ ما موقع الشعر. هل البعد الجمالي جزء لا يتجزأ من العواطف العشقية والعواطف الإيروسية.

هذه الأسئلة وغيرها تثيرها في الأذهان قراءة مجموعة «قصائد حب» للشاعرة سعاد الصباح الصادرة عن دارها 1997.

ونحن لن نحاول أن نجيب على هذه الأسئلة بل سنشارك الشاعرة في طرحها لنلامس عالمها المتميز ونبضها الخفي.

ومن يقرأ دراستنا المبكرة عنها والتي تحمل عنوان «الوجه الخفي للشاعرة سعاد الصباح» يتبين الفتنا مع عالمها الشعري ومحاولتنا لاستكشاف ملامحه الظاهرة وروحه في الأعماق.

ومراجعتنا هذه لمجموعتها الأخيرة لن تشذ عن روح الاستكشاف هذه دون أن نهمل النتائج التي توصلنا إليها في الدراسة السابقة.

تفتتح الشاعرة قصائد حبها الثماني بقصيدة عن الكتابة لأن الكتابة بالنسبة إليها رسالة عن العشق الذي يصهل في عروقها وينسج كلمات على الورق. لكنه عشق أوسع من الحب الذي نعرفه في المعجم يتخذ مسارات عاطفية أكثر منها جسدية ويبث لواعج لا عن الجنس بل عن الحرية والهوية والكتابة في مجتمع يقمع الحرية،

ولا يعترف بهوية الأنوثة، ويعتبر الإفصاح عن الذات حقاً من حقوق الذكر. فالكتابة عندها هي إعلان استقلالها والاعتراف الذاتي بهويتها. وممارسة حريتها التي اغتصبت منها.

ولعل خاتمة القصيدة تعمق ذلك كله بإحساس جمالي ينم عن الانتصار والبهجة لهذا كله، تقول:

سوف أبقى أصهل

مثل مهرة فوق أوراقي

حتى اقضم الكرة الأرضية بأسناني

كتفاحة حمراء

(ص 28)

فالعشق هنا ليس جسداً يتضور جوعاً للجسد الآخر، بل هو صهيل من أجل الحرية، وهوية وصيرورة في حضارة معادية، ونداء للذات الواحدة كي ترفض القسمة وتمارس الوحدة في عالم الحب والعشق. فالعشق هو وسيلة الذات إلى الصيرورة. والكتابة الشعرية طريقها إلى الجمال والحرية.

والكتابة عند الشاعرة الصباح حرية لأنها تفرغ نظامها النفسي والعصبي من العبودية والأسى في مجتمع لا يحتفل إلا بالديوك والثيران والخيول. إن نفسها المفخخة تتفجر على الورق كفعل لممارسة الحرية ووعي الصيرورة، وإدراك للهوية، وحقها في الحياة والحب، تقول:

أريد أن أكتب
لاتخلص من فيضاناتي الداخلية
إنني كسرت جميع سدودي
أريد أن أتخلص من هذا الفائض الكهربائي
الذي يحرق أعصابي
التي تركض في شرايبيني
ولا تجد مكاناً تخرج منه

(ص 71)

فالعشق عندها إذن ليس نزوة جسدية بل اكتشاف للجسد بهوية مختلفة. وتعبير عن غريزة حضارية. تدغم آدم وحواء في خليقة واحدة.

وحين تفتتح الشاعرة قصيدة الحب الثانية تصرح بذلك قائلة:

تتشكل أنوثتي على يديك
كما يتشكل شهر إبريل
شجرة شجرة

( ص 31)

والقصيدة كلها تقوم على هذا الاكتشاف بفرح وإحساس بالحيوية. تقول:

على يديك أكتشف للمرة الأولى

جغرافية جسدي

تلة تلة

ينبوعاً ينبوعاً

..........

..........

إنني مدينة لك

بكل لوزي

وخوخي

وتفاحي

بكل هذا التنوع في أقاليمي

وبكل هذه الحلاوة في فاكهتي

( ص 32-34)

فالشاعرة لا تتحيز تحيزاً أعمى للأنوثة ضد الذكورة كردة فعل على ثقافة الحريم التي تدمر الجسد والذات والحضارة من أجل ارتعاش اللذة. إنها تستعيد فرح التواصل وتلاحم بذرة الخليقة بشقيها الذكر والأنثى في غريزة الحب التي تتكون في رحم الحضارة لا في اهتزازات الجنس الضوئية فحسب. تقول في نفس القصيدة:

على يديك

أدخل دائرة الحضارة

(ص 63)

ومع أن الشاعرة تسعى في الجوهر إلى تثبيت الهوية للأنثى مقابل الذكر، إلا أنها لا تقسم البذرة الواحدة، ولا تمزق الصيرورة المشتركة. إن تشكل الأنوثة لديها مرتبط بالآخر الذكر. وارتعاشات الفرح والخصوبة لم تكن ممكنة لولا روح الانتماء العميق إلى هذه الشراكة. تقول:

تتشكل أنوثتي على يديك

كما يتشكل قوس قزح

..........

..........

وعندما تنتهي من رسمي

أخرج من بين شفتيك

مبللة كوردة

شفافة كقصيدة

(ص 35)

وكما أن الجسد فرح وخصوبة، إلا أنهما لا يصيران إلا بالحب. فالحب عندها حضارة والحضارة حب يدخل في أساس الوجود والكائنات والعالم.

وتتغير صورة المحبوب تبعاً لذلك؛ فلم يعد ذلك الفارس حارس القيم الذي يختطف الحبيبة ويأسرها. فصوته يذكرها بصوت المطر. وأحزانه بأحزان الطيور الذاهبة إلى المنفى، فكلاهما مضطهد مطارد من قراصنة القيم أو قراصنة السفن. وكما شقق ملح البحر شفتيه فإنه غارق في أمواج الحبر الأسود مصلوب على ورق الكتابة ومطلوب حياً أو ميتاً من الطغاة. فالنضال من أجل الحرية جنون، والتحدي يؤدي إلى الاغتراب والنفي. لكن تشكل الهوية وتناغم الأنوثة مع المناضل الحر المنفي المشرد من أجل الصيرورة، والاكتمال، أمر يستحق المقامرة والتضحية. فالحس الرسالي يتقدم على الفرح بالشهوة والحب كغريزة حضارية هو الميزان، ورغم أن الشاعرة لا تحرمنا من نشوة الفرح الحسي في صورها وأدائها ونشوة الحواس إلا أنها تتمركز في الرسالة والكتابة والحرية وصيرورة الإنسان الجديد بشقيه حواء وآدم. فالحبيبة تتماهى مع هذا المناضل من أجل أن تكون هذه الصيرورة التي تغامر من أجلها الشاعرة وتركب المخاطر. وتضحي بأمانها الاجتماعي من أجل صفائها الذاتي وحسها الرسالي. تقول في خاتمة قصيدتها الثالثة:

أريد أن أصعد إلى ظهر سفينتك

التي لا تعترف بالمرافئ...

ولا تعترف بالجزر

ولا ترسو في أي مكان

أريد أن أخبئك في صدري

عندما تشتد الريح

وتعصف العاصفة

فإما أن أنجو معك

أو أغرق معك

( ص 45)

وتعود في مفتتح القصيدة الرابعة لتطرح الأسئلة المركزية التي تجلو ذاتها في مرايا متعددة. ولكنها تنبع من جوهر الذات الواحدة. العاشق هو المعشوق والمعشوق هو العاشق وإن اتخذ ذلك صورة استفهامية بلاغية. والعشق ليس وليمة جسدية يلتهم فيها الذكر الأنثى أو بالعكس، إنه أمومة. تقول في مفتتح قصيدتها الرابعة:

طالما طرحت على نفسي

أسئلة طفولية

هل أنا حبيبتك؟

أم أنا أمك

هل أنا مليكتك

أم مملوكتك

هل أنا أنا

أم أنا أنت

(ص 49)

وتسارع الشاعرة لتعترف قائلة :

إن الأمومة في داخلي

تطغى على جميع العواطف الأخرى

(ص 50)

وتسترسل القصيدة لتحدد العلاقة العشقية، علاقة الأم مع ولدها الذي تخاف عليه كل الخوف. وهو أمر لاحظناه في دراستنا المبكرة عنها وقلنا أنها لم تسبق إليه. وهو ملمح يرتبط بطبيعة الشاعرة المتمردة والثائرة. لكن انتماءها للإنسان والقيم لا يخبو، لذلك فإن عشقها عشق آخر، والحب عندها قيمة القيم التي تتولد منها الحياة الجديدة.

ماذا تفعل هذه الشاعرة ذات الحس الرسالي لا الشبقي مع الحبيب حين يتحول إلى دكتاتور صغير وطفل فوضوي أكثر من أن تصير أماً تعيد الحياة والأشياء إلى توازنها. كيف تلجم البروق التي تركض في شرايينها، وتتحول إلى الانعطاف والحدب على طفلها المدلل بغير الرسالة والكتابة والعشق.

وفي القصيدة السابقة التي سوف نحللها فيما بعد سنرى أن الشاعرة تخصص قصيدة كاملة ليدي الحبيب. ومن الدلالات التي تتضمنها يدا هذا الحبيب هي الحدب وحنان الأبوة. كيف تشعر هي بالأمومة نحوه ثم تشعر بالتالي بعواطف الأبوة منه نحوها؟.

وهي تبرز بهذا الإحساس المزدوج بالأمومة مرة منها نحوه، وبالأبوة منه نحوها ما سميناه بالحب الحضاري. أليس هذا تصعيداً لعواطف الشهوة والغريزة إلى مستويات أخرى من الحب؟ وهو من مرئيات الشاعرة المبدعة في النظر إلى الحب لا نجده عند شاعر أو شاعرة أخرى. وهو بالتالي لا يعني التنكر لرغبات الجسد بقدر ما يعني استكناه بعد آخر دون أن يتخلى عن الشهوة. قد يستغرب المرء هذا اللون من الحب لأول وهلة، كما يستغرب الحب الأفلاطوني والحب العذري لمخالفتهما الغريزة والطبيعة. فالحب الأفلاطوني هو حب بالعقل لا بالغريزة. والتواصل فيه يتم بالفكر وخارج عالم الشهوة. وكذلك الحب العذري هو الحب الذي لا يؤدي إلى التواصل الجسدي ولا يتحقق بالزواج. فيظل ملتهب التوق إلى الآخر بتصعيد روحي تلبى فيه الرغبات بالتعبير الذي يؤدي إلى تحررها والشعر الذي يحولها إلى نشيد مقدس.

وما معنى أن تطغى عاطفة الأمومة عند الشاعرة الصباح على العواطف الأخرى في حبها؟. ثم ما معنى أن تشعر بالتالي بالأبوة تفيض من يدي الحبيب عليها دون أن تتخلى عن التعبير عن شهوة الجسد؟!.

وكأنه مستوى آخر من الحب. وسمناه بالحب الحضاري ويأتي بالتسلسل بعد كل من الحب الأفلاطوني والحب العذري في الظهور والتشكل.

وفي تعابيرنا العامية كثيراً ما سمعنا الزوجة تنادي الزوج بيا أخي ويا أبي. وأن الأخت من صفات الحبيبة في كثير من تقاليد الحب الشرقية في الغزل.

ويتداخل فن الرسالة بفن القصيدة في نشيدها الخامس للحب. وهي قصيدة تقوم على علاقة الحضور والغياب. وتبتدر الحبيبة بأن تعاقب الحبيب دون أن تدري أنها تعاقب نفسها. وتختار لهذه الدراما أن تجري في باريز عاصمة الحب، وكأنها تعايش المشهد الباريزي ولا تستحضره من الذاكرة، وتلتقط ريشتها لوحات منه تتمحور حول وحدة المرأة والرجل وتختار هذه الريشة النموذج الباريزي للحب الذي يضم طرفي اللعبة الرجل والمرأة. لذلك فهي حين تختار باريز غياباً للحبيب فكل شيء فيها يذكرها بحضوره. وبالتالي يكون غيابه حضوره فلا تنأى الشاعرة عنه بقدر ما تنأى عن نموذج الحب وتكسر نسقه. إنها لا تطيق البعاد فتعود إليه لتعتذر عن هذه الخطيئة. ولكنها في الأعماق تظل تشعر بالخوف من أن تخرج خاسرة من المعركة. إنها معه ولكنها لا تصل إليه، وهو ناءٍ عنها ولكنه معها. واختيار المشهد الباريزي إطاراً لدراما الحضور والغياب لا يخلو من سمة الانبهار الذي نعهده عند قطاع واسع من النخبة

العربية المثقفة. لكنه هنا يتمحور حول النموذج العاطفي على حين أن نماذج الفكر والاقتصاد والسياسة كانت السابقة.

يرشح مطلع القصيدة السادسة بالرومانسية فبعد أن تقطف قمراً من فضاء القصيدة وقصيدة من سقف القمر تعود لتؤكد على تورطها في الحب كحالة حضارية. لكن التورط في الحب كموقف عاطفي يقودها إلى تورط نفسي وتورط ثقافي وتورط فني.

وتعلن تورطها في الحب كشرط وجودي ووسلية لإعلان الذات استقلالها. وقدرتها على ممارسة حقها في الحب والحياة كما تشاء إلى درجة التطرف يرافقها وعي بهذا الدور ترفعه إلى متلقيها بصوت عالٍ، تقول:

أصعد إلى فضاءات

لم تصعد إليها امرأة قبلي

وارتكب كلاماً عن الحب

لم ترتكبه سيدة عربية قبلي

ولا أظن أنها سترتكبه بعدي

أتورط معك

حتى نقطة اللارجوع

وأمشي معك بلا مظلة

تحت أمطار الفضيحة
(ص 82-83)

هنا تستوقفنا كلمتان في هذا المفتتح الشعري للقصيدة السادسة: كلمة أرتكب، فكأن ممارسة الأنثى لحقها في الحب والحياة هي نوع من الارتكاب بلغة الثقافة الجاهزة. فترد الشاعرة على ذلك ببلاغة الآية ﴿ومكروا ومكر الله﴾.

والكلمة الثانية هي في الواقع صورة وحالة نفسية تفرضها هذه الثقافة المعلبة على المرأة، فيصبح نبض قلبها واختلاج روحها وجسدها ضرباً من الشبهات والعثرات وانقياداً إلى الضلال والزلل. فالعبودية طاعة شرعتها على الأنثى النصوص المقدسة. والحب فضيحة مع أنه أنبل ما ينبض في قلب الإنسان والحيوان والكائنات.

والشاعرة تدرك مدى الورطة التي هي فيها. ولا تستنكف عن الفضيحة والارتكاب إذا أدى ذلك إلى تثبيت الذات وجلاء الهوية التي تكافح من أجل شراكة إنسانية بقيم الحب والحرية والحياة.

أغلب عرائس الغزل اللاتي استنطقهن الشعراء من عهد عمر بن أبي ربيعة إلى نزار قباني كن رغم التعبير عما في نفوسهن من عواطف خفرات، وإن تغير صوت المرأة عند نزار ليكون أجرأ على البوح بما تكن النفس في الأعماق.

لكن سعاد الصباح وطليعة مبدعة من النساء من جيل سابق أو مواكب - كوليت خوري وليلى بعلبكي وغادة السمان وأحلام

مستغانمي - جعلن للمرأة حضوراً منافساً ومميزاً للصوت الآخر الذي عهدناه في الإبداع المذكر.

كلهن اتخذن من الرواية جنساً أدبياً يلائم التمرد والثورة على شروط ثقافة جاهزة إن لم نقل معلبة تضع المرأة في القارورة والرجل في الفضاء.

إلا أن مي زيادة اتخذت من القصيدة والمراسلة وحضورها في صالونها الأدبي في القاهرة وحوارها مع عبقريات زمانها من الرجال وسيلة لتثبيت ما تحاول سعاد الصباح تثبيته حقاً مساوياً في الحرية والحياة والحب والقلم للمرأة والرجل على حد سواء.

إلا أن سعاد الصباح بمفرداتها وصورها ونبضها الشعري تنسف كل الحواجز، وتعلن أنها متورطة ومرتكبة متحدية لغة الثقافة المعلبة ومواقفها الجاهزة. فتعيد رسم صورتها ورسم صورة حبيبها ورسم الرقيب والنقيض على مقاس الرؤية الجديدة التي تتحمل أعباء التورط في العاطفة والجسد والثقافة والوجود والفن والشعر.

تقول الشاعرة معبرة عن موقفها:

أخرج على النص القديم للأنوثة
واخترع أنوثتي كما أريد
..........
..........

أخرج من عباءة عنترة بن شداد

وأدخل تحت عباءتك

أهرب من فراشي المصنوع من وبر الجمل

واستلقي على أعشاب صدرك

لاحظ كيف يلتحم النزوع الإيروسي والموقف الثقافي: الهروب من فراشها، من وبر الجمل، والاستلقاء على أعشاب صدر الحبيب.

وكيف أن الخروج على النص القديم للأنوثة يؤدي إلى نصها الجديد. والخروج من عباءة والدخول تحت عباءة رجولة أخرى واعية وليست مستعبدة. تقول:

أخرج من بطن الخرافة

وأسنان شيخ القبيلة

واخلع الحذاء الصيني الضيق

من عقلي وقدمي

وأذهب معك إلى آخر الحرية

فالحرية إذن هي نص الأنوثة الجديد، المرأة ليست جسداً ووليمة إنها شريك كامل في الحب والحياة والحرية.

وتعود الشاعرة لترسم لنا صورة معشوقها في القصيدة السادسة من قصائد حبها بعد أن رسمته لنا في القصيدة الثالثة. ورغم أنها لا تخالف صورته هنا جوهر صورته، هناك فالصفات الأساسية يعبر

عنها بصورة حسية أو بيانية متنوعة . ولكنها غير مختلفة . فهناك شقّق ملح البحر شفتيه، وهنا يتزوج البحر كناية عن الانفتاح على السفر والعالم . وكذلك تنوع الشاعرة على صفة الإبداع والكتابة والحب والحرية . تقول:

أيها الرجل المنهك بنرجسيته

والمنهك بتعدديته

لا حظ لي معك

فإما أن أجدك مكتظاً بالنساء

أو أجدك مكتظاً بالشعر

أما أن أجدك نائماً مع امرأة جديدة

أو نائماً مع قصيدة جديدة

لكنها في صورته هنا تضفي عليه صفتي الغموض والزئبقية بالإضافة إلى النرجسية التي لم تتوفر في قصيدتها السابقة:

أيها الغامض كالأساطير

والمترجرج كالزئبق

لكن عاشقها في نهاية المطاف لا يتجسد وليس من الضروري أن يتجسد . لأنه على ما يبدو أقرب إلى المثال والنمط منه إلى الواقع . لا أريد أن أقول إنه فكرة كما في الحب الأفلاطوني ولكن الشاعرة تجعله توأماً لها في الحب والحرية والإبداع وعبادة الجمال والانفتاح على

السفر والبحر. وليس بمستبعد أنه يكون له أصول واقعية لكن الشاعرة تسمو به إلى درجة المثال والنمط.

ونعود لنقول إن حبيبها، وصورته، تطورا من فارس القيم الموروثة إلى فارس الابداع والحرية، الذي إذا شمّت رائحته أنجبت عشرين طفلاً.

ومع أن العاشق عندها ليس من الضروري أن يتجسد أو يكون شخصاً، لكنها تسبغ عليه من الصفات ما يجعله نموذجاً إنسانياً للإبداع والحرية والحبّ. لكن نصها يستدعي مشاعر إيروسية تبتهج بحواس الذاكرة ابتهاجاً جمالياً يخفف وطأة التجريد الذي حاولته الشاعرة أو عدم التجسيد الذي ألمحت إليه في القصيدة:

ليس مهما أن تتجسد
فأنا أمضغك في أحلامي
كحبة فاكهة
فيسيل السكر على جدران ذاكرتي
............
............
واشم رائحة رجولتك
فانجب عشرين طفلاً

(ص 93)

أما القصيدة السابعة فتتمها الشاعرة بالرسالة، وتفردها ليدي الحبيب. وكأنما هو شخصية ويداه شخصية أخرى. وليست القصيدة سوى تصوير سريالي لذاكرة اللمس وحاسته. وهي طريفة وملفتة. فلم أقرأ شعراً ينصب على حاسة اللمس وذاكرته في موضوع الغزل كهذه القصيدة من قبل. تقول:

أكتب هذه القصيدة ليديك
نعم يديك
فيداك هما أكثر منك حناناً
وأكثر فهماً لطبيعة النساء
وأسرارهن
وعوالمهن الداخلية

(ص 101)

لاحظ الحنان وطبيعة النساء والأسرار وعوالمهن الداخلية. نحن هنا أمام لغة للحب أداتها اللمس وما يكتشفه من مخبأ المشاعر والأعماق الداخلية لطبيعة النساء، ومفتاح ذلك كله يدا العاشق. تقول:

هما الساحل الرملي الذي أتمدد عليه
عندما تضربني العاصفة
وهما النخلتان اللتان أهزهما

عندما يأتيني المخاض

فتتساقط رطباً جنياً

(ص 104)

وازدواج شخصية العاشق ويديه بما تولدانه من سحر، يبرز في اعطاء صورة للعاشق لم نلمحها في القصائد السابقة وهي صورة الذكورة التي تمنع عن الشاعرة الهواء والحرية والحضارة وصورة اليدين المتعددة الفوائد والدلالات والموجودة في شعور الانتماء والأبوة تقول:

هما تتصرفان بحضارة

وأنت تتصرف ببدائية

(ص 105)

لعبة الضمائر هنا لا تستقيم إلا إذا حددنا الدلالات الدقيقة التي تخطر في معارجها مخيلة الشاعرة وأحاسيسها.

فاليدان تصبحان تجسيداً للقيم الجميلة في الحب بينما صاحبهما يمثل الطغيان واستبعاد الأنوثة لا في مؤسسة خارج العاشق والمعشوق بل في العاشق ذاته فيداه :

.. تفتحان ألف باب للحوار

وأنت تغلق في وجهي كل الأبواب ..

(ص 105)

أحتمي بيديك القويتين

عندما لا أحد يحميني

(ص 106)

فالإيجاب يتركز في اليدين بينما السلب يتمركز في صاحبهما

يداك دائماً كانتا معي

............

............

أما أنت فتتصرف كأي حاكم عربي

لا يؤمن بالرأي الآخر

ولا بالفكر الآخر

ولا بالجنس الآخر

أو كأي شيخ قبيلة

يتحدث عن الشورى والتعددية والحوار المفتوح

ولكنه لا يحاور أحداً

ولا يستشير أحداً

(ص 107)

فهي تتخذ كما ترى من العاشق مظهراً للطبيعة التي لا تهتم إلا بالحنان والجمال والخير لكن في تمثيله للنظام الموروث يحد الحنان

بالصرامة ويصادر الحرية ويحجر على الأنوثة ويحجز الحوار ويمنع التعددية .

ذلك كله تجسد في العاشق ويديه . وتتخذ الصورة كما يتخذ الرمز مناخاً سريالياً للوحة تشكيلية فنية مركزها اليدان أما باقي الجسد فتشكيل عليهما ـ والتشكيل الفني السريالي هو عماد هذه القصيدة اللوحة .

إن تسافر إلى مكان في العالم
فخذ جميع حقائبك
واترك يديك

(ص 112)

يداك كانتا دائماً
حمامتي سلام

(ص 109)

أنني أزور يديك
عندما تكون خارج البيت
واشرب معهما قهوة الصباح
وأبوح لهما بكل شوقي وشجوني

(ص 110)

وكما تشعر هي بالأمومة نحو عاشقها فإنها تشعر بأبوة يديه:

شكراً لأبوة يديك يا سيدي

................

................

فقد كانت بيتي في زمن التشرد

وسقفي في زمن العاصفة

ووطني

بعدما سحبوا سجادة الوطن من تحتي

(ص 114)

يمكن طبعاً عقلنة مشاعر أمومة الشاعرة نحو عاشقها. كما يمكن عقلنة إحساسها بأبوة يديه وحمايتهما للأنثى فيها، لكننا هنا لسنا في صدد الحقيقة الشعرية؛ فالشاعرة تتكلم عما فوق الحقيقة في عالم سريالي تتداخل فيه الأحاسيس والمشاعر لتشكل إكليلاً شعرياً واحداً تضفره الشاعرة من الأعماق.

وليست خاتمة القصيدة أقل سريالية مما ورد فيها من صور. وعلى حين أننا نفهم أن تكون اليدان كتابين أو غابتين تلجأ إليهما الشاعرة في حال الاكتئاب أو خشبتين ينقذانها من الغرق أو مدفأتين تتكوم عندهما في وقت القشعريرة، لكن كيف نفهم الخاتمة بغير الاحساس

السريالي حينما تطلب الشاعرة من حبيبها أن يسلم على يديه إن هو صادفهما بالمصادفة في مطار أو مقهى.

ورؤية الشاعرة للعاشق ويديه أشبه برؤية رسام سريالي يفرز اليدين في ناحية وكامل الشخصية في ناحية أخرى، في مقابلات تكشف إحساسنا بقيمة اليدين وعالمهما بشكل شعري ينطوي على عشق الذاكرة لحاسة اللمس وما تولده من انطباعات ومشاعر وذكريات. لذلك ابتدأت الشاعرة هذه القصيدة بقولها إنها تكتب هذه الرسالة إلى يديه مدرجة إياها في مسمى القصيدة.

وهكذا تصبح عاطفة الحب عند الشاعرة تسامياً للجنس والغريزة إلى عواطف أسمى كعاطفة الأمومة وما فيها من حنان وإلفة. وعاطفة الأبوة وما فيها من إحساس بالأمان والحماية دون أن تتنكر الشاعرة لأشواق الجسد التي غالباً ما تأخذ في شعرها تسامياً جمالياً في البيان والعبارة والإشارة.

ثم أن هذا يذكرنا بوجهها الخفي الذي عالجناه سابقاً في دراسة مستقلة. كانت تحب الفارس الذي تطمئن فيه إلى القيم والحماية وبفقدانها له بالموت تحولت عاطفة الحب عندها إلى الابن الذي اختطفه الموت منها أيضاً ولم ينقذها من ذلك غير الشعر الذي حررها من الحماية والموت والحزن، وأخذت تحس من خلالها بهوية الأنثى التي لا ترى في غير الحرية مطلباً وغاية في عالم يقوم التحيز فيه للذكورة وثقافة تصادر الآخر والاعتراف به لا سيما إذا كان هذا الآخر أنثى لا حول لها ولا قوة.

وفي خاتمة القصيدة الثامنة والأخيرة من مجموعتها تهتف الشاعرة:

يا أيها القديس الذي علمني
أبجدية الحب..
من الآلف إلى الياء.
ورسمني قوس قزح
بين الأرض والسماء..
وعلمني لغة الشجر..
ولغة المطر..
ولغة البحر الزرقاء
أحبك
أحبك
أحبك

(ص 124)

وهي كما ترى تؤكد على قداسة الحب وأبجديته وفرحه ولغة الطبيعة التي يتكلمها ، إلا أنها في متن القصيدة تستعيد شراكة الحب التي لا تنفصم فليس لها الاه وليس له الاها وتسترسل في رسم تفاصيل المشهد الشعري مستعينة بأسطورة فالتنين الغربية معه ، وهو قديس الحب ، معلنة عاشقها الذي تجسدت فيه الطبيعة والثقافة

والحرية من الأسر والتحرر من الرتابة. ولكنها في النهاية لا ترى فيه غير الفرح والحب ولغة الخصب حتى إنها لتعامله كما تعامل عشتار تموز تقدم له النذور وتحرق البخور. وتغسل قدميه بعطر النارنج. لكنها تعريه من قداسة فالنتاين الخرافية وتعلنه قديساً بشرياً يعلم الفرح والحب ولغة الحياة والطبيعة.

وإذا كانت الشاعرة لا تنغصها المعاناة والرؤيا الشعرية، وامتلكت نواحي المشهد الشعري والاسترسال فيه بروح سهلة ممتنعة، وإذا كانت لا تخفي عواطفها الإيروسية وأشواق الجسد المضطربة إلا أن مواقفها الفكرية والوجودية هي الأبرز في المجموعة ككل وفي كل قصيدة على حدة. ذلك أنها كأنثى لا يعوزها الحب وتستطيع أن تمارس عشقها السري دون أن تخشى سطوة الرقابة وصرامة اللعبة التراثية وقيودها في التعامل مع الأنثى وجسدها. إننا نحن الرجال لا نتعاطف مع المرأة غالباً، لأننا لا نشعر بالأعباء الروحية والجسدية التي تنبع من ذات الأنثى وهويتها. لذلك نحس بالنبرة العالية لسعاد الصباح في قصائدها هذه حين تبث لواعجها عن الحرية وصدامها مع الجسد والثقافة ولجوئها إلى الحنان والطبيعة. إلا أن عواطفها المشبوبة تجاه الآخر بحب نقي تهمس بصوت لا يقل نبراً. ولعل المجموعة كلها هي تضافر الإيروسي والفكري معاً في نسيج شعري يشعر الأنثى بالمساواة والندية مع الآخر الذكر. حتى إنها تكتشف فيه مستويات أمومية وأبوية.

إنها تجربة عميقة وورطة كيانية واجتماعية وثقافية وفنية، عاهدت سعاد الصباح نفسها على إعلائها وتوصيلها للآخر. علّها تغير الراهن في اتجاه إنسان الحضارة والحب. وتعيده إلى الطبيعة، وتزيل عنه أغشية تمنع عن جسده الحس، وعن قلبه النبض، وعن عينيه البصر. وأي وسيلة أنجع من الشعر معبّراً عن تجربة إنسانية إلى حد التورط الذي يعبر بالشاعرة إلى الإبداع والحقيقة.

# شعر الحب بين التطرف الشعوري والتطرف الجمالي

د . صلاح صالح

**1. مقدمة أولى – ضفاف الوجدان وجدل الداخل والخارج :**

لدى كل إنسان عالمان يعيش فيهما، وعبرهما: العالم الداخلي والخارجي، الخارجي متمثّلاً بكل ما يحيط بالكائن البشري من موجودات وأشخاص ومساحات مكانية وأحداث، وجميع ما يشكّل العالم. والداخلي متمثّلاً بكيفيّات انعكاس هذا العالم وإعادة تشكيله، جملة وتفصيلاً، داخل النفس الإنسانية التي تعيد صنعه وصياغته وفق سلسلة لا تنتهي من عمليات التفاعل اللانهائية بين كل ما يحدث خارج نطاق ذات الكائن البشري وبين الطبيعة الشخصية التي يمتلكها كل كائن على حدة. ومن المستحيل وفق هذه القراءة

«البسيطة والأوّلية» للإنسان ومحيطه أن يكتفي إنسان ما بالعيش في أحد عالميه الداخلي أو الخارجي، فالناس جميعاً تفرض عليهم طبيعتهم الإنسانية أن يعيشوا بشكل متواتر في العالمين، ولكن وجود هذين العالمين يفرض سبيلين للنموّ أمام الشخصية الإنسانية: النموّ باتّجاه الخارج والنموّ باتّجاه الداخل.

والشخصيات الإنسانية تفترق وتتمايز فيما بينها من خلال غلبة النموّ في أحد السبيلين، وازدياد وتيرة تسارعه. وترى «الصحّة النفسية» بصيغتها المدرسية التقليدية، أن الشخصية النامية باتّجاه الخارج موجودة غالباً لدى السياسيين ورجال القانون والباحثين الاجتماعيين والمشتغلين في الأوساط الطبية والصحيّة والمشتغلين أيضاً في أطر العلوم الأساسية والتطبيقية. والشخصية النامية باتّجاه الداخل موجودة أساساً لدى الفنانين، أدباء وشعراء وموسيقيين ورسامين ومسرحيين، وموجودة كذلك لدى الأخلاقيين والمتصوّفين، وربّما تنفرد الفلسفة ـ ويليها في ذلك النقد ـ بقدرتها الاستثنائية على إقامة توازن نظري افتراضي في قوّة النموّ وحدوده الدرجية بين السبيلين المتاحين للنموّ.

وربما كان من النافل التذكير بالقدرة المميزة للغة العربية في توفير المناخ الملائم للشاعر، من أجل تمكينه من التجوال بحرّية قصوى، وإلى مسافات بعيدة الغاية، وعميقة الغور في عالمه الداخلي، وهو يلاحق العالم الخارجي باتّساعه الهائل، منعكساً ومحفوراً في خلاياه

وأعماق وجدانه، لتأتي القصيدة بعدئذ برقاً ونوراً منبثقاً من أعماق الوجدان.

فالشعر في قدر كبير منه استغوار للنفس الإنسانية، واستبطان للعوالق الراسية فيها، والآتية إليها من عواصف العالم الخارجي، التي تتحول في الدواخل البشرية إلى أمور ومسائل مختلفة باختلاف البشر، من غير أن تفقد طبيعتها العاصفة بالضرورة. والشعر تجوال فذّ وخطير ـ بل يمكن الزعم أنه شديد الخطورة ـ بين عواصف ذات عنف مزدوج، وتوتّر مضاعف، فما يحدث في الخارج لا قيمة له من وجهة نظر الشعر، ما لم يؤسّس نفسه مرّة أخرى في داخل المبدع الشعري. العصف الخارجي يؤثّر في الداخل، ويحفر فيه شروخاً وأخاديد وأثلاماً متفاوتة العمق والحدّة، وينتج بنى «مؤقّتة أو تتمتّع بقدر ما من الديمومة» لم تكن موجودة من قبل، ليزدحم الداخل في نهاية المطاف بجملة من التوتّرات والاهتزازات والعواصف ذات القيمة المزدوجة أو المضاعفة، أي: عواصف العالم الخارجي مضافاً إليها ما سبّبته، أو أحدثته من عواصف أخرى في داخل الإنسان المبدع.

ومن هنا تتأتّى خطورة التجوال في أفياء تلك العواصف. وعبر هذه العلاقة بين الداخل والخارج تبرز القيمة الاستثنائية للتجوال الخطير ضمن تلك الخطورة المزدوجة. وغنّي عن التبيان أن الشعر الأفضل والأجمل هو ذلك الذي ينجم عن استغوار أعمق في الداخل الإنساني، وتجوال أوسع وأرحب في العالم نفسه، فكلّما دلف الشعر

إلى الراقات الأكثر عمقاً وإعتاماً في النفس استطاع اقتطاف النادر والثمين والفذ من تلك الأعماق، وكلما اتّسعت المساحة الداخلية التي يتجوّل فيها تنوعت حصيلة الشعر وتشكّلت فكرة الوفرة والثراء.

لا يغيب عن الذهن ازدحام المشهد العربي ـ والعالمي، الآن وعبر التاريخ، بركام هائل من الشعر الذي اكتفى بالتجوال في تفاصيل العالم الخارجي وشؤونه وقضاياه التي لا حصر لها، ولكن لا يغيب عن الذهن أيضاً أن هذا الضرب من الشعر يوسم عموماً بخلّوه من الحرارة والصدق، وبافتقاد القدرة على التأثير ومساءلة أعماق المتلقّي. فالقصيدة التي تُقتطف من العالم الخارجي بصورة مباشرة، أي قبل عبورها بمخاضات الوجدان، لا قيمة لها قياساً إلى تلك التي تتنسّم عبقها الكثيف ممّا ينمو على ضفاف الوجدان، سواء كان المُقتَطَف منتمياً إلى عوالم الداخل أو الخارج، ففي داخل الإنسان يتكثّف العالم الخارجي بكلّ ما فيه من رحابة وثراء وتنوّع يفوق القدرة على التصوّر، وهذا ما صاغه ابن عربي في بيته المشهور الذي يخاطب فيه الإنسان:

وتزعم أنك جرم صغير　وفيك انطوى العالم الأكبرُ

2 . مقدّمة ثانية — القيمة الخاصّة لشعر الحبّ :

هناك من يرى أن كلّ شعر الحب الذي أبدعته العبقرية البشرية، عبر جميع الأمكنة والأزمنة وفي جميع الثقافات، يرمي إلى مجرد إبلاغ رسالة تقرُّب وتواصل من طرف إلى طرف في العلاقة الأزلية بين الذكر والأنثى، ويمكن اختصارها بكلمة «أحبك» أو «أريدك» بكسر الكاف أو فتحها، وذلك بحسب طبيعة المرسَل إليه بطبيعة الحال. ولكن واقع التنوّع المدهش الذي جاءت عليه قصائد الحب وقصصه، وطرائق إبلاغ رسائله في ثقافة الإنسان يشير إلى خلاف ذلك، بل يخالفه مخالفة مطلقة، إلى حدّ إمكانية جعل عدد طرائق التعبير عن الحب، وطرائق صياغته يوازي عدد الذين أوصلوا رسائل حب، أو يسعون إلى إيصالها، في كل زمان ومكان.

وقد يكون من النافل التذكير بالمكانة الأسمى التي تحتلّها عاطفة الحب من بين العواطف الإنسانية التي لا حصر لها، فهو العاطفة الأسمى لأنه يعني في جملة ما يعنيه انفتاحاً أقصى على الآخر، واستعداداً للبذل والتضحية في سبيله، وإيثاره على الذات. والحب في جوهره وصيغته الصافية بذل من الذات من غير أن يرجّي الباذل مقابلاً، لأن انتظار المقابل، حتى لو كان مقابلاً شعورياً خالصاً يقلّل من قيمة الحب ويعكّر طبيعته الصافية، وينزع منه جوهر ما جعله حبّاً، ويحوّله إلى عملية تبادل للمنافع، حسبما جاء في رواية «المدعوّة» للفيلسوفة الفرنسية سيمون دو بوفوار، التي ترى أن الحب

يعني حب الآخر لذاته، مهما كان هذا الآخر، ومن غير رجاء مقابل، فإذا كان هناك انتظار مقابل، حتى لو كان مقابلاً شعوريّاً صرفاً، كما سبقت الإشارة، تنقلب مشاعر الحب، وتتحوّل من حبّ للآخر إلى حبٍّ للذات، وهذا ما يدمّر عملية الحب، ويحوّلها إلى منتهى الأنانية.

وقبلئذ منذ قرون ابتدع هذا المعنى الشيخ الأكبر محي الدين بن عربي مخلّصاً الحب من أثقال الأنانية والتمركز حول الذات، وجاعلاً إيّاه فناءً أقصى للعاشق في المعشوق، حين أكّد أن «كلّ شوق يسكن باللقاء لا يُعوّل عليه، وأنّ كل حبّ لا يغنيكَ عنك لا يُعوّل عليه».

والحب هو العاطفة الأهم لارتباطه بجوهر الحياة، وجوهر استمرار النوع البشري الذي لا يستمر من غير حب، فعبر عملية الحب التي تؤدّي إلى إنجاز التناسل والإنجاب يكمن خلود النوع البشري حسبما جاء على لسان «امرأة ألحان» في «ملحمة جلجامش» إذ لخّصت تلك المرأة البسيطة مغزى استمرار الحياة وفكرة الخلود في عملية «الحب» والإنجاب، بعد أن كان الملك/الإله قد أضاع عشبة الخلود التي عاد بها من عالم الأزل، واستكمل إثرئذ يأسه من القدرة على الخلود ومقاومة الفناء والزوال.

الحب بوصفه الوسيلة الوحيدة أمام البشرية لمقاومة الفناء، يُعدّ ضرورة وليس شهوة، وهذه المقاومة ينخرط فيها جميع أبناء الجنس البشري، ذكوراً وإناثاً، من غير أن يعوا أنهم يقاومون عملية الفناء

وعياً مباشراً، والحب في هذه المقاومة ليس وقفاً على الطرفين المتحابّين، بل يتعدّاهما إلى منح المواليد الوافدين إلى الحياة حبّاً من نوع مختلف بطبيعةِ الحال.

إنّ كل تعبير حب أو فعل حب يندرج في بناء مستقبل الجنس البشري قاطبة. وهنا لا بدّ من التنبّه إلى أن تعابير الحب العفوية التلقائية، وأفعاله اليومية المكرورة بطريقة تفوق الخيال على مستوى البشرية، أمور تختلف بصورة جوهرية عن التعابير الفنية أو الفلسفية التي تُساق في الإطار ذاته، فما أنجزه الأدب ـ على شيء من التخصيص ـ وصاغته الفلسفة بعدئذ، في إطار التعبير عن الحب هو الذي أنسن عملية الحب، ومنحها طبيعتها الثقافية التي أخرجتها من صيغتها الحيوانية الصرفة، وحوّلت ممارسة الحب إلى ممارسة ثقافية إنسانية راقية. وفي رأي جان جاك روسو في أطروحته حول نشوء اللغات، أن اللغة نشأت أساساً للتعبير عن المشاعر الإنسانية، وفي طليعتها مشاعر الحب، ولم تكن نشأتها تلبيةً وظيفيةً للإعراب عن الحاجات وتبادل المصالح. ولذلك كله، فإن كل تعبير فني جديد عن الحب هو إسهام جديد في بناء ثقافة الإنسان، وإسهام أهمّ في تعميق إنسانيته التي تتهدّدها في مطلع هذه الألفية الثالثة نكوصات مرعبة باتجاه أبعاده الحيوانية المتوحّشة التي تسيطر عليها شهوة الدم، ولا تتملّكه عبرها إلاّ رغبة الغزو والافتراس.

لا شكّ في أن الناس جميعاً يضمرون إمكانية الصوغ الفني الجميل للتعبير عن الحب، فربّما كان في أعماق كلّ منا يكمن فنّان أو أديب أو فيلسوف، ولا شكّ أيضاً في أن كلاًّ منّا يضمر قدرات مدهشة على الإبداع والابتكار، لكن المبدع وحده ـ الشاعر في الحالة التي نناقشها ـ هو الذي يستطيع إخراج الكامن في الباطن إلى الجهر والعلن، وهو الذي ينقل الرشيم في البذرة من حالة الكمون إلى حالة النموّ ونضارة الاخضرار، ونحن جميعاً نقرأ الأدب، ونقرأ الشعر لأسباب عديدة ربّما يتصدّرها أننا نجد في الأدب «الشعر خصوصاً» إخراجاً للكامن في الأعماق إلى الظهور والتجلّي، والتجسّد بشكل راقٍ وجميل، أي يستطيع الشاعر أن يقول الكامن في أعماقنا بصورة أفضل وأجمل مما نستطيع نحن فعله في السياق نفسه، ومن الطبيعي أن تكون الأشياء قد تقررت في السرّ والخفاء حسب تعبير ابن عربي:

تقرّرت المنازل في السكونِ    ورجّحت الظهور على الكمونِ

ولكن لا قيمة للكامن في الخفاء والسكون من غير عبور إلى الظهور وممارسة الحضور الواضح الصريح، وبهذا التصوّر تكون كل قصيدة حب رائعة عبوراً رائعاً من منزلة الكمون إلى منزلة التجلّي والظهور.

**3 . مقدمة ثالثة — شعرية النثر :**

التعريف التراثي للشعر الذي يجعله مجرّد «كلام موزون مقفّى» لا يزال يحظى بقبول واسع النطاق في منطقتنا العربية، وهذا التعريف يلفظ من دائرة الشعرية جميع ما أُنجز في نطاق ما سمّي بالشعر الحرّ، أو شعر التفعيلة، أو قصيدة النثر، وهو بالمقابل يحشر في دائرة الشعرية جميع ما جرى سبكه في قوالب العروض العربي من كلام لا يتمتّع بالصفة الجمالية، أو الفنّية، لا من قريب أو من بعيد، ك «ألفية ابن مالك» المشهورة التي تضمّنت قواعد اللغة العربية، بعد أن سكبها ابن مالك في قوالب العروض العربي، فتحولت إلى كلام موزون مقفّى. وهذه الفكرة بحثها الدكتور كمال أبو ديب في كتابه «في الشعرية» باستفاضة وجدارة لافتتين، مشيراً في الكتاب نفسه إلى أن العرب عندما تعاملوا مع القرآن الكريم أوّل الأمر سمّوه شعراً، وهذا يعني ـ وهو المهمّ في ما نحن بصدده ـ أن العرب حتّى في أيام الجاهلية كانوا يملكون فهماً رحباً للشعر والشعرية، فهماً يجعل الشعر يتفلّت من حصره، وحبسه البائس في جعله مجرّد «كلام موزون مقفّى».

وهناك من يتوسّع بالمفهوم إلى جعل كل مجاز في الاستعمال اللغوي اليومي درجة، أو حالة من حالات الشعرية، وتتردّد الآن ومنذ وقت غير يسير، في المشهد النقدي، عربياً وعالمياً، عبارات من مثل: «شعرية السينما، أو الشعرية البصرية، أو شعرية الرواية وشعرية الموقف..» وما شابه ذلك، وهي عبارات تنفتح جميعها

باتجاه توسيع مفهوم الشعرية إلى حدود شديد الميوعة، وتستعصي على الضبط والتحديد، بحيث صار الشاعر المعاصر يعتقد «ألاّ وجود اليوم لطبيعة ميتة أو لفعل، وألا وجود لمنظر طبيعي أو لفكرة خارج مجال الشعر»، حسبما جاء في «قضايا الشعرية» لرومان جاكوبسون. ورأى بول فاليري ضرورة العودة «إلى المعنى الاشتقاقي لكلمة الشعرية لفهم ما تعنيه، فجعلها اسماً لكل ما له صلة بإبداع كتب أو تأليفها، حيث تكون اللغة في آن واحد الجوهر والوسيلة» حسبما جاء في كتاب «الشعرية» لتزفيتيان تودوروف.

والاستفاضة في تناول مفهوم الشعرية، تضييقاً أو توسيعاً، ليست مهمّة في إطار الشغل على مجموعة من القصائد النثرية، فالمهم هو ضرورة الإشارة إلى مشروعية انضواء القصيدة النثرية في صلب خانة الشعرية، إذا توفّر فيها ما يجعل الشعر شعراً، وخصوصاً في إطار قدرة النسق التعبيري النثري على اختزان القدر الكافي من الزخم الوجداني، وكثافة الإحساس، والقدرة على الحفر في وعي المتلقّي، ونهوض النسق اللغوي / الشعري بعبء شغل مجمل الفضاءات المشار إليها، والنثر بحسب تعبير الدكتور كمال أبو ديب يصبح «طاقة شعرية غنية حين يموضع في بنية كلّية معيّنة».

وإذا جوبهت هذه الدعاوى بخلوّ قصيدة النثر من الوزن والتقفية فالرد يتلخص في أن مجرّد إخضاع الكلام للوزن والتقفية لا يجعله شعراً، بدليل صوغ ألف بيت موزون مقفّى في موضوع قواعد اللغة العربية، وآلاف أخرى في موضوعات وميادين مشابهة، فالوزن

والموسيقى الخارجية والقافية عناصر محدودة جدّاً من عناصر عديدة لا بدّ من تضافرها جميعاً ليكون الشعر شعراً، والبحر العروضي الواحد والقافية الواحدة في عروض الخليل كانا من سمات القوالب الخمسة عشر، أو الستّة عشر التي جاء عليها معظم شعر العرب ـ وليس جميعه ـ إذ أسقط عصر التدوين جميع ما خرج عن تلك القوالب التي بلغ الخروج عليها ذروة مهمّة في الحقبة الأندلسية عبر شعر الموشّحات.

ولا يتحطّم القالب القديم لمجرّد أن الحياة تغيّرت وتطوّرت بحيث يفرض عليها التطوّر ابتداع قوالب جديدة ملائمة لطبيعة المتغيرات في الحياة الجديدة، بل أيضاً ـ وهو الأهم في نظر الشكلانيين الروس ـ لأن القالب القديم قد استهلك نفسه، وأصبح بالياً من كثرة الاستعمال.

لقد أتقن أجدادنا الجاهليون ابتداع عدد ملائم من القوالب الرائعة لسبك تجاربهم الإبداعية والشعورية، وكان اختراع تلك القوالب عملاً رائعاً وعظيماً من غير شك، ولكنهم لم يغلقوا الباب أمام إمكانية ابتداع قوالب جديدة، ومن حق الأجيال اللاحقة أن تبتكر قوالب أخرى أكثر ملاءمة لحياتها على غرار ما فعل الأندلسيون عبر شعر الموشّحات، والتزمّت الراهن بشأن الانغلاق داخل القوالب الشعرية الجاهلية، يشكّل دعوة صريحة لا لبس فيها لقتل الإبداع، ومصادرة التفكير فيه، حتى بوصفه مجرّد إمكانية، ومَن يقتل الإبداع ويلغي مشروعيته في مجال من المجالات، يستطيل بالأمر إلى قتله في

عمومه وجوهره، وفي مجالاته كافّة، جاعلاً ممّا أنتجه القدماء سقفاً أعلى يندرج في خانة «المقدّس» الذي لا يجوز مسّه، أو حتّى التفكير بمسّه.

ولذلك، من حقّنا أن نعدّ الخروج على القوالب الشعرية القديمة، أو تحطيم تلك القوالب مقدّمة لا بدّ منها لابتداع قوالب جديدة، وأشكال وقيم جديدة، مع الإشارة إلى أن الإكتفاء بعملية التحطيم لا يُعتبر قيمة بحدّ ذاته، بل تكمن قيمته في مجرّد عدّه خطوة، أو تمهيداً في سبيل ابتكار الجديد.

**4 . «قصائد حبّ» للدكتورة سعاد الصباح:**

هي ثماني قصائد نثرية في موضوع واحد هو الحب، والحب هو الغطاء الأكبر لعدد لا يحصى من المشاعر الإنسانية النامية في اتجاهات عديدة، حب الإنسان للإنسان، وحبه للخير والطبيعة، وحب الأطفال وحب الوطن و. . كل شيء، ومشاعر الحب تتدرّج قوّة وضعفاً بطبيعة الحال، بدءاً من عدم الشعور بالنفور، ثم الارتياح والوداد، وانتهاء بعصف الهوى وفناء العاشق بالمعشوق.

القصائد خلت من العناوين للإشارة إلى ما ينتظمها جميعها، فهي تدور في فلك الحب، واكتفت بوضع أرقام للقصائد على غرار ما جاء في «آلام» الشاعر نديم محمد الشهيرة التي حملت قصائدها أرقاماً وليس عناوين، وعلى غرار الأعمال التشكيلية التي تأتي تسميتها

تحت أرقام، فيشار إلى بعضها بالعمل رقم كذا، أو التكوين رقم كذا. وإغفال ذكر العنوان له دلالته الواضحة بطبيعة الحال، فهو من جانب، يربط تلك القصائد «النثرية والحديثة جدّاً» بالموروث الشعري العربي الذي خلت قصائده من العناوين، ونجد من جانب آخر أن إغفال العنوان يعفي المتلقّي من حصر دلوفه إلى عالم القصيدة بنافذة واحدة، أو مدخل واحد، تجسّده عملية العنونة، فكثيراً ما نُظر إلى العنوان بوصفه مصادَرة مسبقة لوعي المتلقّي، وقسره على التعامل مع المادّة المعنونة من خلال بوابة العنوان فقط، وهذا ما يمكن أن يحدّد تعامله مع القصيدة أو العالم الذي تضمه القصيدة بما يضيئه أو يشي به العنوان.

وتندرج القصائد في صياغة خطاب الحب الأزلي المتبادل بين الرجل والمرأة منذ عهدهما الأقدم بالصياغة الجمالية أو الثقافية لمشاعر الحب، ومن الطبيعي في هذا السياق أن تُتّهم القصائد بتكرار ما سبق، أو بانتهاج خطى من سبق، وقبل مناقشة مسألة التكرار، من المستحسن أن نشير إلى أن الشكوى من السقوط في براثن التكرار قديمة في موروثنا العربي القديم، فمنذ الجاهلية الأولى نجد زهير بن أبي سلمى يجهر بتلك الشكوى قائلاً:

ما أرانا نقول إلا معاراً   ومعاداً من لفظنا مكروراً

فهل اكتفت قصائد الحب التي نظمتها سعاد الصباح بمجرّد التكرار؟ أم ماذا؟

وفي سياق الإجابة نجد أن ما قالته الثقافات البشرية قاطبة في إطار خطاب الحب يمكن عدّه مجرّد «تقاسيم على وتر الحبّ» إذا جاز التعبير، ومع ذلك لم تخلّد تلك الثقافات إلا ما جاء متمتّعاً بقدر من الفرادة وامتلاك الطاقة الخاصّة على التجاوز والديمومة الحية في هذه الثقافة أو تلك، مع ضرورة التحفّظ بشأن إطلاق الفرادة والجدّة ضمانةً أو شرطاً لخلود العمل الفني، فهما ليستا كافيتين ما لم تأتيا محمولتين على حامل جمالي فني مناسب، متمتّع بمقوماته الذاتية التي تجعله عملاً فنيّاً، وإلاّ تصبح كلّ خراقة جديدة مؤهّلة للخلود والديمومة.

إن ما ذكرته في المقدمات الثلاث يلمّح بصورة جلية إلى أن قصائد الحب تسند بعض قيمتها على ما جاء في المقدمات، بوصف ذلك معياراً عريضاً للقيمة، بحيث يتحدد حجم القيمة، زيادة أو نقصاناً، عبر ارتباط القصائد بالمعايير. ولكن مثل هذا الإجراء «التعسّفي» يخالف منطق القيمة الشعرية ومنطق الشغل النقدي على حدّ سواء، فمعايير القيمة الشعرية ليست موحّدة على أي صعيد، ولا يجوز استيرادها أو فرضها من خارج النص الأدبي، فالمقدّمات المشار إليها، وإن جاءت في موضع العتبة من الشغل النقدي على القصائد، فهي مستقرأة ومستقاة من قصائد الحب نفسها أولاً، ومن مجمل ما استطعت استخلاصه من مجمل التجربة الشعرية لسعاد الصباح ثانياً، ومن سياق تجربة الشعر العربي - والإنساني - ثالثاً.

5 . **ولّادة وسافو :**

ازدحم تاريخنا الثقافي منذ الجاهلية بشعر الحب المسمى «شعر الغزل» الذي عرّفه القدماء بأنه مدح النساء وذكر محاسنهنّ في سبيل التقرّب منهنّ ونيل ودّهن. وواضح أن هذا التعريف يستلب من النساء حقّهن في ممارسة الفعل الموازي لفعل الذكور، ويصادر منهنّ إمكانية الإعراب عمّا يجيش في صدورهنّ من مشاعر وعواطف تجاه الطرف الآخر، وقد حفل تاريخنا الأدبي العربي بعدد غير يسير من الشواعر اللواتي انصرفن عموماً عن التطرّق إلى ذكر مشاعرهنّ تجاه الشريك العاطفي، وكأنّهنّ كنّ بذلك يرسّخن الفكرة الذاهبة إلى أن تحفّظ الأنثى وانطواءها على نفسها وعلى عواطفها، واكتفاءها بالاستقبال والتلقّي هو معطى فطري «بيولوجي» في كينونتها الإنسانية، التي تتناقض جوهرياً مع هذه الحالة السالبة من الانطواء والاكتفاء بالتلقّي، والتخلّي الطوعي عن حق ممارسة الفاعلية، والتعبير عن الذات، هذا الحق الذي يعدّ صفة ملازمة لإنسانية الإنسان.

عرف الأدب اليوناني القديم، في بحر القرن الخامس قبل الميلاد الشاعرة سافو التي كانت صريحة وجريئة في الإعراب عن مشاعرها ورغباتها وصوغها شعراً، وعرفت الحقبة الأندلسية من تاريخنا الأميرة الشاعرة ولّادة بنت المستكفي الخليفة الأموي، التي أطلقت للمرة الأولى في تاريخنا الثقافي حق المرأة في التعبير عن مكنوناتها

ورغباتها التي قمعها تاريخ الطغيان الذكوري الحافل بالمجازر الكبرى ومهرجانات الدم، عبر بيتها المشهور:

أمكّن عاشقي من صحن خدّي    وأعطي قبلتي من يشتهيها

ومن النافل التذكير بأن ولاّدة وسافو تنتميان إلى حيّز الاستثناء في الثقافتين العربية والغربية على حد سواء، فقد ظلّت ثقافة الغرب المسيحي حتى أواسط القرن التاسع عشر فارغة من أمثال سافو في إطار الجرأة في الإفصاح عن مكنونات النفس، وخلا تاريخنا حتى أواسط القرن العشرين من أمثال ولاّدة.

وفي «قصائد حب» لسعاد الصباح تتوضّح رغبة ابنة القرن العشرين في الانتماء إلى خانة الاستثناء وسلوك الدرب الصعب، فهي لا تكتفي بكسر القوقعة التي حبسها فيها الرجل بعيداً عن ممارسة أية فعالية عموماً، وعن أية فعالية ثقافية خصوصاً، بل تحرص على أن تحطّم الجدار الأكثر ثخانة وقوّة من تلك القوقعة، وتكشف المحنّط في توابيت «التابو» المحرّم، لتتابع مسيرة من كان قد انتمى قبلها إلى ذرى الاستثناء، وليس إلى منخفضات القاعدة ومنبسطاتها، ليس لأنّها رفعت صوتها، واندفعت عكس التيار، وامتلكت الشجاعة لتكتب حب الأنثى للرجل بصورة صريحة من غير مواربة، بل لأنها قبل كل شيء كتبت شعراً جميلاً في إطار ذلك الاندفاع الذي لم يشأ أن يتموّه بتاريخ من المواربات والالتفاف على القصد، أو يتقنّع بتاريخ موازٍ من الزيف وتستير الحقيقة بأردية مهترئة من العادات والتقاليد والأخلاقيات الدارجة المتخمة بالرياء والكذب إلى حدّ مفجع.

**6 . الخارج مصوغاً شعراً في الباطن :**

قد لا يكون من المجدي أن نتناول قصائد الحب واحدة واحدة، إلا على صعيد تقديم شروح مدرسية «متوسّطة» المستوى ومحكومة بقدر كبير من التبسيط. ولذلك من الأفضل أن نتناولها بشكل إجمالي عبر استجابة بعض أنساقها للمعايير الرئيسية التي جعلناها مدخلاً للتعامل مع القصائد، بعد استقائها من مصادرها الكبرى التي أشرنا إليها قبلاً، أي القصائد نفسها وشعر الشاعرة بمجمله في سياق تجادله مع التجربة الشعرية العربية والإنسانية قديمها وحديثها.

ففي سياق قدوم الشعر، أو عبوره بمخاضة الوجدان، أو استشراف ضفافه طويلاً قبل الخروج إلى العالم والإعلان عن تشكّله الخارجي عبر القصيدة، نجد ذلك واضحاً في القصائد إلى درجة الطغيان، فمنذ الصفحة الأولى في القصيدة الأولى نجد أن الحضور الخارجي للرجل / الشريك العاطفي لا قيمة له قياساً إلى حضوره في الوجدان والأعماق:

«فأنا أستطيع أن أستحضرك
دون أن تكون حاضراً
وأستطيع أن أتلمّسك
دون أن تكون إلى جانبي»

ق (1) ص (15)

وفي القصيدة الثالثة تكتسب رائحة البنّ في مقاهي روما قيمتها من رائحة الرجل المقيم في أعماق الأنثى، وليس الجالس على الكرسي المقابل لها:

«يذكّرني وجهك
ببراري طفولتي
ورائحتك
برائحة البن في كافتريات روما»

ق (3) ص (39)

صحيح أن الوجه والرائحة هنا ينتسبان إلى العالم الخارجي لكن فعل التذكّر يعيدهما إلى الدواخل والأعماق قبل استعادتهما من هناك مغموسين ومنغمرين ببراري الطفولة ورائحة البن.

والقصيدة الرابعة مزدحمة بتفاصيل عديدة مما يعيشه ابن القرن العشرين بشكل تلقائي يخلو من أية ميزة أو فعالية جمالية كـ «شراء التعاويذ الفرعونية والحجابات الشعبية من خان الخليلي وقصّ الأظافر، وتجفيف الشعر واستعمال الشامبو وصابون الحلاقة ومعجون الأسنان.. وغير ذلك» ولكنها جميعها تصبح ذات قيمة عاطفية وجمالية بسبب ارتباطها بالجيشان العاطفي في الأعماق.

وتكتظّ القصيدة السادسة بارتحالات خارجية يجعلها بعد المسافات في تعارض أقصى مع فكرة الكينونة الداخلية، وفكرة استصدارها

من الأعماق كـ «القمر والتحليق على ارتفاع 32 ألف قدم، والقطار الذي يخرج عن القضبان، وعباءة عنترة بن شداد، والحذاء الصيني الضيق، والبحّار الفينيقي الذي ليس له مرافئ ثابتة» لكن تلك الارتحالات تبدو من غير قيمة ما لم تتلون بمضغات الحلم وسيلان السكر على ضفّتي الذاكرة والوجدان:

«ليس مهمّاً أن تتجسد
فأنا أمضغك في أحلامي
كحبّة فاكهة
فيسيل السكر على جدران ذاكرتي»

ق (6) ص (93)

القصيدة السابعة موجهة إلى يدي الآخر اللتين تقعان موضوعيّاً خارج العالم الباطني للشاعرة، لكنهما عبر احتلالهما تلك المساحة المثيرة في الأعماق يرسمان صوراً آسرة للعالم الخارجي في مقاهي السان جرمان بباريس ومطارات العالم وأماكن تناول قهوة الصباح، فهاتان اليدان النابتتان على ضفاف الجداول الداخلية لدى الشاعرة هما:

«الغابتان الكثيفتا الشجر
اللتان ألتجئ إليهما في حالات اكتئابي
وهما الخشبتان اللتان أتعلق بهما

عندما أشرف على الغرق

وهما المدفأتان اللتان أتكوم أمامهما

عندما تنتابني القشعريرة»

ق (7) ص (108).

والقصيدة الأخيرة تُختتم بـ«قوس قزح»، ولغة الشجر ولغة المطر، ولغة البحر الزرقاء، وإشارة إلى النساء المحترفات، وعوالم عيد الحب والقديس «فالنتاين» لكنها تنضاف إلى سواها في جعل ذلك كله ينفذ إلى الداخل، لتعاد من هناك صياغته وتشكيله من جديد، قبل أن يتكشّف عن قصيدة تبدو أنها مقصورة على تناول بعض جماليات العيش الخارجي.

ويتجلى جدل الداخل والخارج في أبهى صوره في القصيدة الخامسة المفعمة بجماليات مدينة باريس ومعالمها الشهيرة على المستوى العالمي، وجماليات العيش الباريسي أيضاً، كـ«السير تحت مصابيح الشوارع والتعامل مع أكشاك بيع الجرائد وزيارة الحدائق العامة والعشاء في أحد مطاعم الشانزيليزيه والاستمتاع الراقي بأجوائها الثقافية الراقية، واستذكار رامبو وإيلوار وأراغون، وزيارة اللوفر، وبرج إيفل ومبنى الأنفاليد الذي يضم قبر نابليون، وزيارة مركز بومبيدو ومقاهي الحي اللاتيني.. وغير ذلك..» لكن باريس الرائعة الجميلة تتحول إلى سجن بارد، وإلى مكان كئيب مضجر لأن داخل المرأة كان مغلقاً دونها، وكان السبيل إلى فتحه لاستقبال زخم

كل تلك العوالم الجميلة هو وجود الآخر الشريك العاطفي الذي أدّى غيابه إلى أن يتحول قضاء عطلة نهاية الأسبوع إلى عملية مؤلمة للغاية، حتى لو كانت العطلة في مدينة جميلة كباريس:

«إن عطلة نهاية الأسبوع
التي قضيتها بعيداً عنك
تحوّلت إلى خنجر في لحمي
وصداع يحفر جبيني»

ق (5) ص (75)

فالألم في هذه القصيدة يبلغ ذروته عبر الإحساس بالتعارض القائم بين جمال العالم الخارجي وانغلاق الداخل دون الإحساس به لأن ذلك الداخل كان يستشعر بؤسه الخاص الناجم عن فقدان صحبة الشريك:

«أنني وحيدة في باريس
حتى الوجع
وضائعة حتى الوجع
وأفتقدك حتى أوجع
.. كنت أريد أن أختبئ في أشجار صوتك
علّه ينقذني من هذا البرد الذي يخترق عظامي
كنت أريد أن أتعلق بذراعيك

حتى أستعيد توازني

فأنا بدونك عصفورة مكسورة الجناحين

ومركب يغرق»

ق (5) ص (78، 79)

إن كل ذلك الجمال الذي شعّ من مدينة باريس المنعكسة في القصيدة الخامسة تحوّل إلى نقيضه المطلق، تحوّل إلى وجع وبرد يخترق العظام، وإلى جناحين مكسورين ومركب يغرق، لأن الداخل لم يستطع أن يستقبله ويعيد تشكيله إلا عبر صبغه بما تكثّف في ذلك الداخل من ألم وضيق، يبلغان ذروتهما في صرخة الشاعرة في قصيدتها الأولى من قصائد الحب التي تجعل فيها الكتابة مجرد فعل استشفاء للتخلص من فيضاناتها الداخلية، على حد تعبيرها.

إن العالم الخارجي ينكسر ويضمحل ويفشل في ممارسة الفعالية المتوخّاة في صنع فضاء الحب والاستمتاع بكثافة حضوره داخل اللحظة إذا لم يستطع الانصهار في مرجل الباطن، لتعاد صياغته شعوريّاً، أوّلاً، ولغويّاً شعريّاً، ثانياً، حتى لو تمثل ذلك العالم بالحضور الكثيف للمعشوق أو الشريك العاطفي ذاته، وكأنّ ما سبق عرضه يذكرنا بالبيت المشهور لجميل بن معمر الذي يعلن فيه أن بثينة نفسها لا أهمية لحضورها الخارجي الذي يقتل الهوى في نفسه، على حدّ تعبيره، لأن الحضور الحقيقي جاء على حساب تشكّلها في داخله، بحيث أدّى إلى إلغاء الصورة النامية والمتوهّجة في القلب

والوجدان، ولذلك تعود الصورة الداخلية إلى التوهّج والسطوع في ساحة المشاعر، بعد غياب الصورة الخارجية، فيعود الشاعر للتعايش مع ذلك الهوى العاصف العنيف المضطرم في الأعماق:

يموت الهوى مني إذا ما لقيتها    ويحيا إذا فارقتها فيعودُ

**7 . أقاصي الحب وأقاصي الجسد وحرارة البوح :**

في دراسة سابقة لي حول شعر سعاد الصباح جعلتها تحت عنوان «شعرية البوح» احتلّ الحديث عما سميته «شجاعة الاعتراف» في خطاب الحب لدى الشاعرة حيّزاً لم يكن ضئيلاً، وربّما وُجد من يذهب إلى أنّ الاعتراف بما يعتمل في الداخل ليس مظهر شجاعة على الإطلاق، بل هو مجرد حالة من حالات الضعف البين التي تنتاب الشخصية البشرية، ولا يتعلق الأمر بأحد الجنسين دون الآخر، بل يتعلق بالرجل والمرأة على حد سواء.

فمعروف في تراثنا الشعري الجاهلي أن بوح الشاعر بعواطفه الحقيقية تجاه المرأة التي يحبها، عده الجاهليون مظهر ضعف وخنوثة لا يليق برجل كامل الرجولة إعلانه، فقد استنكر الذوق الجاهلي على الأعشى الكبير اعترافه بأنه لا يطيق فراق من يحب في مطلع معلقته الشهيرة:

ودع هريرة إن الركب مرتحلُ    وهل تطيق وداعاً أيها الرجلُ

وفي الحديث النبوي الشريف ما يحض على التكتّم في قوله: «استعينوا على قضاء حوائجكم بالكتمان». وفي «نهج البلاغة» للإمام علي أنّ «صدر العاقل صندوق سره» ومثل ذلك في تراثنا، وفي تقاليد العيش العربي ـ قديمه وحديثه ـ كثير. فالشجاعة وفق هذا السياق تتجلى في أن يستطيع المتألم كتمان ألمه، وكبس الجرح على الملح، وليس إطلاق التأوّهات وصرخات الاستغاثة والألم، إلى حدّ أن جبران خليل جبران جعل ذلك منتهى النبل حين قال: «ما أنبل القلب الحزين الذي لا يمنعه حزنه من أن ينشد أغنية فرحة مع القلوب الفرحة».

ولكن بالمقابل ألا يُعدّ مجرّد الوقوف في مواجهة كل هذا التيار الجارف شجاعة؟ قد نوافق على أن كتمان الألم عملية تحتاج إلى القوّة والتجلّد والبأس، ولكن ذلك أمر، والاعتراف الجمالي بحقائق شعورية وجسدية معينة أمر آخر يختلف عنه بصورة جوهرية، إن مجرد التفكير بمواجهة كل ذلك التيار الجارف العنيف من استحسان التكتم والحض على الانغلاق وإخفاء الألم يُعدّ ضرباً من ضروب الشجاعة، فكيف إذا خرج ذلك التفكير إلى حيز الإنجاز والفعل، وتحول إلى خطاب فني موجه لقاعدة واسعة من القرّاء والمهتمين؟.

والشجاعة تبلغ أضعافها حين يصدر الخطاب عن الجهة الأكثر تعرّضاً للقمع وأوامر الانغلاق والتقوقع، والتبرقع والنواهي الصارمة الباتّة الباترة عن أيّ إعلان عن أيّة عاطفة، أو رغبة أنثوية تجاه الشريك، حتى في الإطار الشرعي، أو الحياتي الحميمي المعاش.

ولذلك كلّه تتضاعف قيمة خطاب الحب الأنثوي في الشعر العربي عموماً، وتتضاعف أكثر عندما تتّخذ بعض أنساقه صيغتها الجمالية المميزة التي تجعله خطاباً قادراً على الديمومة والعلوق في الذاكرة الثقافية للزمن، وقادراً على الوصول إلى متلقّين عديدين يدرجونه في تكوينهم الثقافي، بوصفه جزءاً من ذلك التكوين وبوصفه يحمل في قوامه طاقة تغيير.

وفي «قصائد حب» سعاد الصباح نقرأ صخب العواصف الأنثوية الفائرة، والضجيج الذي يحدثه خروجها وتشكّلها، وسعيها المشروع للإسهام في التأسيس الثقافي لخطاب الحب الأنثوي في الشعر العربي المعاصر. فتأتي معظم الصياغات على شكل انفجارات تعبيرية لغوية، وكأنها معادل موضوعي لانفجارات عاطفية ورغبوية أو نزوية، عانت صاحبتها من كبتها طويلاً، والمهمّ أنّ الانفجار كان يأتي في نهاية المطاف أقوى من القدرة على كبته وإبقائه كامناً في الأعماق، فنقرأ في القصيدة الأولى ضرورات «كسر جميع الحدود، وضرورة التخلّص من الفائض الكهربائي في البدن، ونقرأ البروق التي تركض في الشرايين، ومضغ العاصفة، ومواجهة محاكم التفتيش، والرغبة في فتح ثقب في لحم السماء، والصهيل فوق الأوراق حتى قضم الكرة الأرضية بالأسنان».

وتزدحم القصيدة الثانية بمفردات الأنوثة التي تشكّل جوهر الأنوثة وسحرها وأسرارها ومخاطرها كـ«الهضاب التي تزداد مع الحب ارتفاعاً، والشفاه التي تزداد اكتنازاً، والشعر الذي يزداد

تطايراً». وفي القصيدة الرابعة إشارة إلى «الخراب الجميل الذي أحدثه الآخر في الأخرى وفي حياتها». والقصيدة الخامسة تسمّي كلام الحب «ارتكاباً»، وفيها تورط حتى نقطة اللارجوع والمشي بلا مظلة تحت أمطار الفضيحة، وإنجاب عشرين طفلاً من مجرد شمّ رائحة الرجولة.

وفي القصيدة السابعة نجد أن يدي الرجل هما الأكثر فهماً لطبيعة النساء وطبيعة أسرارهن، مما لدى الرجل من أمور ذكورية أخرى، وهما «تفتحان ألف باب للحوار». وتتوّج القصيدة الثامنة خطاب الحب ببذل أنثوي مثير يصعب أن يطمح إلى ما هو أكثر منه أي رجل:

«سأذهب إلى معبدك أنت
لأقدّم نذوري
وأحرق بخوري
وأغسل قدميك بعطر النارنج
...
وسأبحث لك عن كل الأشياء
التي تحرّضك على مراسلتي
وتحرّضك على مغازلتي»

ق (8) ص (121)

وتختتم هذه القصيدة الخاتمة بقية القصائد بالتحدّي الأنثوي الذي تشهره جميع الإناث أمام جميع الرجال:

«هل يمكنك أن تصمد سنة أخرى

أمام أمواجي المتلاطمة؟»

ق (8) ص (122)

وأمام العاطفة الأنثوية «المفخّخة بألف رطل من الديناميت» والمفخّخة أيضاً بمباشرة الإعلان عن فعل الحب الذي يتكرر في آخر صفحة من صفحات المجموعة ثلاث مرات «أحبك.. أحبك.. أحبك»، ق (8) ص (124)، ما الذي يمكن قوله؟ وما الذي يمكن التعقيب به على كلّ هذا التدفق الرائع المثير؟.

**8 . القصائد النثرية وطاقة النثر على اختزان الشعرية :**

من الإنجازات الكبرى للشعر العربي في الإطار التقني لعملية نظم الشعر، والخبرة الحرفية النادرة في إنتاج الشعرية وإشاعة المناخ الشعري، ما فعله نزار قباني في إطار قدرته المدهشة على تحويل مفردات العيش اليومي وتفاصيله الممجوجة من كثرة الاعتياد إلى طاقة شعرية خلاقة، وعوالم مفعمة بالبهر والجمال، عبر الانزياح بتلك التفاصيل انزياحاً طفيفاً عن مجراها اليومي المألوف، ومدّها بما يجعلها تمارس دورها البنائي الذي لا يمكن الاستغناء عنه في تشييد معمار القصيدة وإشاعة المناخ الشعري الرائع الذي طالعه القارئ العربي في

شعر نزار قباني الذي تتحوّل الجريدة اليومية ورماد السجائر بين يديه من مواد تافهة عديمة القيمة، مكانها سلة المهملات إلى لبنات أساسية في المشهد الشعري العربي المعاصر:

هنا جريدته في الركن مهملة
هنا كتاب معاً كنا قرأناه
على المقاعد بعض من سجائره
وفي الزوايا بقايا من بقاياه

ولا يحتاج قارئ شعر الحب لدى سعاد الصباح إلى إعمال الذهن ليكتشف قدرة الشاعرة على تحويل مفردات العيش اليومي وتفاصيله الكثيرة إلى طاقة شعرية ومكمن عطر يكتظّ بالجاذبية، ويفيض بالعذوبة والجمال، حتى لو أتت تلك المفردات ضمن أنساق القصيدة النثرية الخالصة، خلافاً لما خضعت له أنساق نزار من سكبٍ داخل القوالب الموسيقية العربية العروضية المعروفة، فنطالع في شعر سعاد الصباح «شرب القهوة في كافتريات روما، وصياح الديكة وصهيل الخيول وشهيق ثيران المصارعة، وصرّة الخبز والزيتون، والقطّة التركية المدللة، ووضع شال الصوف على الرقبة، وقصّ الأظافر وتجفيف الشعر، واستعمال معجون الأسنان، والأواني المكسرة، والأجبان الفرنسية، وغير ذلك كثير».

ولم يكن انزياح القصائد بتلك المفردات عن سياقها اليومي المألوف هو السبيل الوحيد لزخم الأنساق النثرية بالطاقة الشعرية، بل

كان الأهم ـ من وجهة نظري ـ يكمن في الامتداد بالحالة الشعورية التي تعاينها القصيدة إلى أقصى حدّ يتيحه لها الامتداد، وليست الحالة الشعورية فقط هي التي تمتدّ عبر القصيدة، أو تمتد بها القصيدة إلى أقاصيها، بل كان حرص القصائد واضحاً على الخروج بالحالة من مستوييها اللغوي والشعوري إلى المستوى الجسدي الصريح، وهذا المستوى هو الذي عدّه التاريخ الثقافي والاجتماعي للمنطقة العربية مكمن الخطر الأكبر، وهو البؤرة / العورة التي يجب تستيرها ووأدها وتغييبها خلف آلاف البراقع والحجب والأبواب الموصدة بآلاف المفاتيح. لكن «الجسد المفخّخ بألف رطل من ديناميت الشهوة» حسب تعبير إحدى القصائد، لا تستطيع تلك الوسائل إبقاءه مكبوتاً ومقموعاً، ولذلك تفجّرت مشاعره ورغباته الصريحة مثلما تتفجر الرعود للاحتفال:

«بميلادي كامرأة عاشقة
وبتفجير انفعالاتي في وجه هذا العالم»

ق (1) ص (18).

.. لأدافع عن كل شبر من أنوثتي
.. لكسر ما لا أستطيع كسره
من قلاع القرون الوسطى
وأسوار المدن المحرمة

ومقاصل محاكم التفتيش»

ق (1) ص (21).

ويتضح عبر هذه الأنساق حجم الحجب خلف جدران القلاع والأسوار ومقاصل محاكم التفتيش، وخطورة تجاوز تلك الحواجز التاريخية المكتظّة بالرعب والهلع، ويتّضح أيضاً أن قوّة التفجر لا بدّ أن تكون متناسبة مع قوة العوامل الضاغطة الكابتة للحيلولة دون وقوع الانفجار، على طريقة العلاقة الضدّية بين الفعل ورد الفعل بالمعنى الميكانيكي الشائع.

ولا تأتي مقاربة المحرّم الجسدي في القصائد عبر حصريّة وقوع الانفجار وحتميته الميكانيكية، بل نجد الأنوثة تتفتّح وتنمو على يدي الشريك العاطفي، وتزخر بكنوزها الشهوية التي لا تغوي إلا باللمس والشمّ والسعي إلى الاقتطاف:

«تزداد غاباتي أوراقاً
وتزداد هضابي ارتفاعاً
وتزداد شفتاي اكتنازاً
ويزداد شعري جنوناً
على يديك
أكتشف للمرة الأولى
جغرافية جسدي

تلةً تلةً

ينبوعاً ينبوعاً

سحابةً سحابةً

رابيةً رابية

مدينة لك

بكل هذا التنوّع في أقاليمي

وكل هذه الحلاوة في فاكهتي

.. تتشكّل أنوثتي على يديك

كما يتشكّل قوس قزح»

ق (2) ص (31، 32)

ورغم الهدوء الظاهري لنبرة الخطاب في هذه الأنساق، فإن ما تضمره استعاراتها من محاميل شهوية ورغبوية يشكل غواية تضمر انفجارها العنيف كلّما تأمل المرء تلال الجسد الأنثوي وهضباته وينابيعه وحلاوات الفواكه فيه.

غير أن أجمل ما في ثنايا هذه القصائد النثرية من طاقة شعرية مختزنة ومبثوثة إلى المتلقّي في آن واحد، يكمن في قدرة القصائد على خرق حدود المألوف أو المتاح في ما تسميه إحدى القصائد «ارتكاب كلام الحب» والاندفاع بالخطاب إلى أقاصي المرغوب فيه، أو المشتهى في سياق عملية الحب التي تقتضي طبيعتها اندفاعاً غير

محدود، وتدفّقاً غير محسوب النتائج على أي مستوى، فإذا لم يأتِ ذلك في الشكل الذي أتى عليه عُدّ انتهاكاً صريحاً لما يجعل الحبّ حبّاً، وإفراغاً له من محتواه الجوهري.

وتجدر الإشارة إلى أن الإرث الثقافي في المنطقة العربية لم يكن جميعه قامعاً لخطاب الحّب، حتى في إطاره الجسدي الذي كان وما يزال يشكل البؤرة المعنية بالكبت والقمع والتخبئة، فقد بلغ التطرف في التعبير عن الحب الجسدي، والعلاقات الجنسية - الطبيعية والشّاذة - حدود الفحش والتهتّك والابتذال في موروثنا الشعري العربي القديم، على أيدي شعراء عديدين من أمثال الوليد بن يزيد، وبشار بن برد وأبي نواس والشعراء المجهولين الذين طالعنا أشعارهم في «ألف ليلة وليلة» وبعض كتب الأدب والأخبار، وجاءت بعض تلك القصائد في «ألف ليلة وليلة» وبعض قصائد بشار وأبي نواس على ألسنة نساء يعربن عن مشاعرهن ورغباتهن الجسدية من غير أية ضوابط أو حدود. لكن ذلك أتى على سبيل الاستثناء، أوّلاً. وجاءت صياغته بأقلام ذكور، ثانياً. وجاء صريحاً ومباشراً وفجّاً إلى درجة التنفير الجمالي في بعض الأنساق، ثالثاً. وجاءت أنساقه في إطار التعبير عن علاقات جنسية، وليس عن علاقات عاطفية شعورية، رابعاً.

وعبر هذه الافتراقات البيّنة بين شعر الحب الذي يتناول الجسد في قصائد سعاد الصباح، من جانب، والموروث الشعري العربي في التطرّف التعبيري عن الرغبات الجنسية، من جانب آخر، يكمن قدر

من القيمة الخاصة لما جاء في قصائد الحب من حرص على الوصول بالحب إلى ضفافه الجسدية القصوى، ذات الخطورة القصوى، في منطقة لا يرى معظم ذكورها في المرأة إلا أداة متعة ووسيلة إنجاب، وفي أحسن الأحوال كائناً يستقبل ويستجيب، ويلبّي، ولا يسمح له إطلاقاً بأيّ فعل من أفعال المبادرة.

ولذلك يستمد كثير من الأنساق الشعرية قيمة إضافية من مجرّد حرص القصيدة على أن تكون الأنثى فيها هي المبادرة، وليست المستجيبة الملبيّة على طريقة الشاعرة الكبيرة فدوى طوقان في أبياتها المعروفة الرائعة:

يا حبيبي نادِني من آخر الدنيا ألبّي
كل درب لك يفضي فهو دربي
يا حبيبي أنت تحيا لتنادي
يا حبيبي أنا أحيا لألبّي
صوتَ حبّي

أما سعاد الصباح فهي تعلن في القصيدة الأولى أنّ الكتابة بحدّ ذاتها فعل مبادرة وليست فعل تلبية، وهي من أجل الحور الذي تقيمه مع نفسها قبل أن تقيمه مع الآخر:

«جوابك لا يهّم كثيراً
المهّم هو ما أكتبه أنا

إن الكتابة عندي

حوار أقيمه مع نفسي

قبل أن أقيمه معك»

وحتى عندما تتناول القصائد الجسد ومسائل الأنوثة، فالشاعرة تحرص على ارتباط ذلك بفعل المبادرة المتجسّد عبر الفعل «أريد» الذي تفتتح به هذا النسق من القصيدة الثالثة:

«أريد أن أذهب معك

إلى آخر الجنون

وإلى آخر التحدّي

وإلى آخر أنوثتي»

ق (3) ص (44).

وأيّ شيء يرجوه الشريك العاطفي من الأنثى أكثر من آخر الأنوثة، الذي يبدو أن الشاعرة استطاعت أن تتجاوزه في القصيدة السادسة إلى أقاصٍ وأصقاع أخرى، وإلى أواخر ونهايات أخرى من العلاقة الأبدية بين الرجال والمرأة التي تجسّدت شعراً عبر علاقة الشاعرة مع الشعر واللغة:

«أتورّط معك

حتى نقطة اللارجوع

وأمشي معك بلا مظلّة

تحت أمطار الفضيحة

أذهب معك

إلى آخر نقطة في اللغة

وآخر نقطة في دمي

حتى استحق أن أكون حبيبتك»

ق (6) ص (88).

ورغم السلبية الراشحة من السطر الأخير في النسق الشعري السابق الذي يحصر وظيفة الأنوثة في مجرد عملية التلبية، والجدارة الخاصة للأنثى التي يجب عليها أن تفعل كل شيء للذكر لتستحق حبه، رغم ذلك، فإنها تعاود في القصيدة نفسها الحرص على مسك زمام المبادرة والتاكيد على أن الحب لديها فعالية واختيار وليس مجرّد استجابة وتلبية:

«أخرج على النص القديم للأنوثة

وأخترع أنوثتي كما أريد

وأحدّد مكان شفتي وألوان عيني كما أريد

.. وأخلع الحذاء الصيني الضيق

من عقلي.. ومن قدمي

وأذهب معك إلى آخر الحرية»

ق (6) ص (91)

وما الذي يمكن بلوغه أو نشدانه بعد آخر الحرية؟، فآخر الحرية هو الذي يمكّن المرأة، مثلما يمكّن الرجل، من أن يكون كلّ منهما إنساناً مكتمل الإنسانية في ممارسة دوره وفعاليته، بوصفه إنساناً متمتّعاً بإنسانية كاملة، وليست منتقصة أو ممسوخة في أداء مجرد وظيفة واحدة من وظائف الذكورة أو الأنوثة.

**9 . تعقيب:**

للحبّ كيمياؤه الخاصّة في الجسد البشري، تبهظه بمعاناة توافداتها، وكثافة احتشاداتها واستبداد مركباتها، وهي تمكّنه في الآن نفسه من بلوغ ذرى من التطرف الحسّي والشعوري، انتشاءً واستمتاعاً ولوعة ووجداً، لا يمكن بلوغها إلا عندما تبلغ كثافة تلك الكيمياء حدّاً معيّناً كافياً لجعلها تسيطر على باقي مركّبات البدن، وهي إلى جانب ذلك تمدّه بطاقة فذة على الخلق والابتكار والعمل على تجاوز الذات.

وكل ذلك يعيشه كل فرد من أفراد الجنس البشري في مرحلة، أو مراحل معينة من حياته، ولكن ما قيمة ذلك كله إذا بقي حبيس التجربة الحسية الشعورية الذاتية؟. ومن خلال الإجابة المفترضة على هذا التساؤل تتأتّى قيمة الشعر، وقيمة اللغة، قيمة الشعر والشاعر

في القدرة الخاصة على نقل التجربة الإنسانية من حيز البدن والمشاعر إلى حيز اللغة والشعر، والارتقاء بها لصوغها بصورة جمالية فذّة ومبتكرة، لم تكن معروفة من قبل. وقيمة اللغة في نهوضها مكافئاً للوجود الذي يتضمّن الكائن البشري الذي يعي الوجود، ويعي وجوده في الوجود بطبيعة الحال، فمن غير اللغة يتحول الوجود إلى إطار مبهم غامض قيمته هي نفس قيمته في غريزة البهيمة التي لا تعي شيئاً. والعلاقة بين الوعي واللغة علاقة تماهٍ، وليست مجرّد علاقة حامل ومحمول، على افتراض أن اللغة حامل للوعي حسبما يجري التعامل معهَا في بعض الحالات.

ومثلما أنّ للجسد البشري كيمياؤه، وللحب كيمياؤه في الجسد، فإن للغة كيمياؤها، وللشعر كيمياؤه الخاصّة في اللغة، وعبر هذه العلائق المركّبة بين كيمياء الجسد وكيمياء اللغة، من جانب أول. وبين كيمياء الجسد وكيمياء الحب، من جانب ثانٍ. وكيمياء الحب وكيمياء الشعر، من جانب ثالث. ينهض الشعر العظيم بعبء عظيم في إقامة علاقات تكافوئية رائعة بين الوعي الجمالي المتجسّد عبر الشعر، وبين ما يجري في إطار علاقة الكائن البشري مع ذاته ومع العالم. والأهم من ذلك هو تخليق عوالم جديدة، ما كان لها أن تتوالد وتتخلّق لولا ذلك الشعر الذي صاغ ولادتها الجميلة. والشعر ليس فقط «حلوى اللغة» حسب تعبير أحد النقاد الفرنسيين، بل هو أيضاً لغة التطرّف الجمالي المنبثقة عن تطرّف شعوري، في الحب أو في سواه

من المشاعر الإنسانية الأخرى، إنه في قصائد سعاد الصباح خطوط وأشكال وآلاف الأشياء الأخرى التي:

«لا تستطيع أن تفهمها
سوى امرأة عربية
تتسكّع على أرصفة الحزن»

ق (7) ص (102).

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of poetry is always paradoxical, as Cleanth Brooks and other New Critics believe, and the method of art is always indirect (See Brook's article: **"The Language of Paradox"**). The reader-critic of poetry is expected to contribute to the writing of the poem and to complete the work of the poet. In the above reading of al-Sabbah's poems I have tried to explain the superficial fluctuation in the poet's attitudes and stances and have related it to the different psychological states from which the poems arose. The poet, like other human beings (and perhaps more than ordinary human beings) has his/her moods and might reflect in his/her poetry not only his/her attitudes, feelings, emotions but also those of other people she/he knows or has read about. I would not agre with critics who might assert that al-Sabbah is contradicting herself, deconstructing her views, writing and then erasing them. Even Simone de Beauvoir was accused of being a submissive woman because of her love letters to Nelson Algren, an American writer. A woman (or a man) could be submissive or defiant provided she chooses to be so, not forced to be so.

As to the artistic value of al-Sabbah's poems, it has been asserted in the above discussion. Al-Sabbah, I believe, would not agree with modernist poets who consider that poetry is just form with little or no content. She would advocate a balance between sound and sense (form and content) and would agree with T.S. Eliot who considers that poetry which is just form or just content is not poetry (See: **Faddul 165-173**). Her poems display a feminist position through a poetic form (imagery, rhythm, etc.) and a poetic language that are typically feminine (the language of a female body, senses, instincts). The unconscious of the poet reveals itself through imagistic techniques (metaphors, metonymys, etc) that condense and displace (Freud's terms) the repressed and that defamiliarize the experiences making them more interesting to read and share.

**Concluding Remarks**

In the above critical interpretation of al-Sabbah's love poems the approach employed benefits from feminist critical theory. A feminist reading of the poems is justified by the introduction of the book in which feminist issues are raised in a direct manner. It is also justified by the poems in this book and by other poems written by al-Sabbah in her other collections, *Fi al-bad' kanat al 'untha* and *Fatafit imra'ah.* Al-Sabbah is evidently seriously concerned with the liberation of the Arab woman from all the fetters that have aborted her emotional, cultural and intellectual development. She would agree with Feminist critics who all recognize the political nature of writing. To these critics literature is part of the real; it reflects the real, creates the real and offeres us alternatives to the real **(Robbins 49-50).** Feminists realize that women have suffered from "physiological oppression or the oppression of the body by virtue of its femaleness ... cultural oppression (in which women are devalued into cultural objects, rather than valued as subjects); and psychological oppression (where women are denied masculine status, and often believe in their own inferiority, because they lack masculine bodies and minds)." Patriarchy which is behind these forms of oppression is "at work, in the home, in the state, the church or other religious systems, the law, education systems, the workplace, in culture at large, and even in women themselves since they often internalize the values which they are fed by such powerful institutions" **(Robbins 50).** Feminist writing should reflect this situation and try to change it and create an alternative more just situation for women.

The poems of al-Sabbah in *Qasa'id Hubb*, like the introduction she wrote aim to combat women's oppression, but the techniques employed in poetry are not those of prose. The language

The persona asks her man on the tenth anniversary of their love whether he could stand her for another year, stand her never ending questions, never ending contradictions and never ending foolishness, and stand "my heavy waves, impossible requests and my emotions loaded with a thousand pounds of dynamite" (122). She is not any longer a passive worshiper of her man. She confesses that she has exhausted him, shattered him and burned his nerves. He cannot travel without her since he might be drowned if he comes close to the sea, might be swallowed by the wolves in the woods and might lose hs virginity if he accompanies professional women (123)

In the final lines of the poem the persona addresses her man:

> *You saint who taught me the alphabet of love from A to Z*
> *Who drew me like a rainbow between earth and heaven*
> *Who taught me the language of trees, rain and the blue sea*
> *I love you.* (124)

In this poem the persona settles on the man of her choice, the product, perhaps, of her dreams and her imagination. She chooses to worship him, does everything to preserve his love, but she also protects him, disturbs him and is not just a passive worshiper. Love here is an exchange, and the man needs the woman as much as she needs him. Both are vulnerable, and their partnership renders them stronger in times of danger and temptations.

cere and more truthful than his mind and reason. His instincts, unlike his reason, are not spoiled by the norms, traditions and culture of a society that views woman as inferior or "other" and treats her as such. The woman will keep resorting to the instinctual in man until his mind is freed from the burderns of a sexist culture that views woman as a body (a sex object) and not as a thinking human being of equal rights and equal talents with man. The pre-Oedipal phase, to employ the theories of Freud and Lacan, is the phase of attachment to the mother for both males and females; it is the phase of bliss. The instincts in this phase are dominant. Males, when they enter the symbolic phase or the world of the father (its laws, rules etc), distance themselves from the authenticity of the mother's world and put on the masks of a patriarchal culture. They, however, retain some remnants of instinctual spontaniety and authenticity. The persona in this poem resorts to these traces of the mother in her man and builds on them, hoping to share again the common ground of matriarchy with him.

This poem, like some other poems in the book, is built on an extended image (the hands) around which rotates several other sub-images. This technique, as mentioned earlier, defamiliarizes the experiences and the objects and enhances the artistic enjoyment of the reader.

The last poem is the persona's reconciliation with man who continues to be her saint (her Valentine), the maker of her time, the master of her days. She worships him in her own way, goes to his temple, offers him votive offerings and incense and washes his feet with perfumes of bitter orange. He is her only resort; all roads lead to him, all pigeons fly to his breast and all the lovers of the world seek his blessings and await his miracles **(117-120).**

They are two great books she reads before going to bed, two thick woods she seeks refuge in when depressed, two pieces of wood she hangs to when almost drowning, two hearthes she sits in front of when trembling of cold. The hands reconcile her with their owner and wipe her tears when she cries. She visits these hands, drinks coffee with them, tells them all her secrets and problems and hands them a complete dossier of all the emotional cases she filed against him and lost **(108-110)**.

The persona highlights the duality between her man and his hands. They behave in a civilized manner while he behaves in a primitive way. They open thousand doors of dialogue while he closes all doors **(105)**. The hands side with her when their owner behaves like an Arab dictator who does not acknowledge different opinions, ideas or different sex or when he behaves like a Sheikh of a tribe who speaks of consultation and open dialogue but does not start a dialogue with anyone and does not consult anyone **(107)**.

The Arab man is schizophrenic in a sense. His hands are peaceful, but he is fanatic; his hands are cultured, but he is of a medium culture. They are flexible, but he is rigid and stiff; they are modernist, but he is traditionalist **(113)**.

The persona asserts that she befriended the hands of her man before befriending him and that her relationship with them is more elevated, nobler and deeper than her relationship with him **(112)**. She ends by thanking the hands for being her house when exiled, her roof in times of tempest, her country after the carpet of her country has been pulled from under her feet **(114)**.

The poet implies that the Arab man is a person with a divided self. His senses and instincts are warmer, more sin-

a new Arab man, but this man gives her no chance to do that because he is still conceited, narcisstic, multi-faceted, overloaded with women or with poems. She is left with no other choice but to proceed alone in her dangerous but rewarding adventure.

This poem characterized by its original striking imagery could be read as a response to Nizar Qabbani's poem "Ikhtari" (Choose). In his poem, Qabbani challenges the woman to choose between love and non-love, between dying on his breast and dying on his poetry notebooks, between Paradise and Hell. He also urges her to speak, get angry, explode, plunge into the sea and to remember that love is a big confrontation, sailing against the current, crucifixion, torture, tears, a journey in an endless space. He explains to her: "I have no faith in a love/That lacks the zeal of revolutionaries/That does not demoish all walls/That does not strike like hurricanes" **(Ahla Qasa'idi, 13-15)**. The persona in al-Sabbah's poem accepts the challenge but cannot make the man who challenged her share the adventure with her.

In the seventh poem, the persona who could not find the man with whom she wanted to share her adventure could at least find his hands (senses) and seek refuge in them. She writes a letter to these hands that are more tender and better understanding of the nature of women, their secrets and their inner worlds than him. She had known the hands, admired them, started a relation with them long ago in Paris. Being an Arab woman loafing on the pavements of sorrow in Paris, she could understand the movements of these hands, the lines and forms they draw in the air. The hands have become the sandy coast on which she sleeps when hit by the tempest, two palm trees whose fruits nourish her when in labor pain **(103-104)**.

share her adventure with a new Arab man who, she hopes, would be unlike traditional Arab men (symbolized by the cloak-like woolen wrap of 'Antarah bin Shaddad'). She wants to escape from all the suffocating images of Arab life (my bed made of the skin of camels, fable's abdomen, teeth of the Sheikh of the tribe, cups of Arabic coffee) and to proceed with her man to the ultimate freedom. To her disappointment this new Arab man is like a mirage. She describes him as a wanderer that cannot be seen by the eye, a gypsy who has married the sea and travel bags. This man is ambiguous like myths, unstable like mercury. Yet if this man is not realizable in reality ("I am gambling on a man who will not come/And a horse that will not win" (92)), the persona could still realize him in her dreams ("I chew you in my dreams like a fruit" (93)) and by just smelling his virility, she could give birth to twenty children (93).

The persona is an extremist who hates compromises and the medium in love and in poetry ("The worst kind of love is the medium love/And the most cowardly poem is that which holds the stick in the middle" (94)). The man she loves is exhausted by his narcissism and his multiplicity, and she has no chance with him. He is overloaded either with women or with poetry. She finds him sleeping either with a new woman or a new poem. She describes him as a Phoenician sailor who has no stable ports, no stable addresses, no stable loyalties. Finally, she describes him as a great actor conceited by his fame. She has no hope even to get his signature because "I arrive always late/After the curtains are lowered/Lights are turned off/And the spectators have departed" (98).

The new Arab woman, the poet implies, longs to achieve her new feminine identity and her new freedom together with

her inner self and reflects her inner conflicts and suffering.

This poem, finally, is wordy and could be read as a parody of some of Nizar Qabbani's love poetry.

The sixth poem resumes the revolutionary stance and tone. It starts with an original image: "I climb to the roof of the moon to pick a poem for you/I climb to the roof of the poem to pick a moon for you/I climb to horizons no woman before me climbed to/And I committ words of love/No other Arab woman committed before me/Or will ever committ after me" **(87)**. The persona in this poem has decided to go far in defying her society and its moral code: "I get entangled with you/To the point of no retreat/I walk with you uncovered/Under the rain of scandal/I proceed with you/To the last drop of language/And the last drop of my blood/To deserve to be your lover" **(88)**.

The feminist agenda of the poet is clarified here: "I swerve from the old (traditional) text of femininity/And I invent my femininity the way I choose/I delineate my lips and determine the colors of my eyes the way I choose" **(91)**. These lines sum up the strategy of the poet who wants to get rid of the traditional definitions of femininity and of womanhood and to create her own alternative definition. She realizes that gender identity is constructed and cultural, not natural or given. The signifier (word, mark) woman could be joined to any signified (concept, connotation) human beings who are in power choose. Men who have been in power have chosen negative signifieds for the word woman, and it is time now to change the situation since women have acquired more power.

The persona in the poem does not want to carry out her project of redefining femininity alone. She rather wants ot

The persona concludes that she discovered that Paris is her man's party not hers and that Paris would not welcome her alone with beautiful flowers because "Paris loves us together." She addresses her man saying:

*You master who plays with my destiny as he wishes*
*Who plans my travels as he wishes*
*I have carried a complete dossier to Paris*
*Containing all your violations and emotional crimes*
*But Paris tore off my papers and sided with you.* **(84)**

The implications of this poem is that even Paris, a Western city, is sexist and prejudiced. It sides with man and does not recongnize the woman as independent. The woman, in this poem, unlike many western feminists, cannot dispense with man and create her own world (Amazon) either by herself or with other women. She still sticks to the heterosexual and heteroemotinal code. She suffers because she cannot develop an independent identity of her own and continues to be a supplement to man.

Artistically the poem is an extended metaphor where Paris is the central image occupying the entire space and where many sub-images (cultural, artistic, historical, architectural and natural aspects of Paris) branch from this central image creating a galaxy of images, some of which are quite original and striking. These images help defamiliarize Paris and present it from a new perspective thus holding the reader's attention and slowing the process of perception (see Shklovsky on defamiliarization as an artistic technique).

Paris in the poem is a projection of the persona's feelings and psychological states. It assumes the colors and shades of

Paris in this poem becomes the symbol and incarnation of love; its architecture, streets, gardens, statues, clothes are made for love. The persona, consequently, feels out of harmony with Paris. She cannot see the paris she knew with her lover. Paris to her now is a destroyed city like Hiroshima, not the city of arts, beatuy and culture she had known. In Paris, the persona had learned with the help of her man how to discover the dimensions of her femininity and of her freedom **(67)**.

The persona then gives the details of her present failure trip to paris. She had no real trip. She did nothing, bought nothing, ate and danced with ghosts, cursed herself, her lvoer and French writers. She shed a tear, remembering "the martyr of divine love, my friend Mary Antoinette" **(68-69)** (Is it the blue blood that unites the persona with this queen?) She felt cold, imprisoned and bored. Nothing could console her, not even "Paris-Match." She needed desperately to call her lover, talk to him to tell him: "You are my king, my love and the sun of my days," to shout as loud as she could "I love you," and to cry ceaselessly, but she retreated. The persona intended to tell her man that the week-end she spent in Paris alone was transformed into a dagger piercing her meat and a headache digging her forehead, but she was afraid he would become more conceited, more narcisstic and would leave her hanging on the ropes of her grief. **(71-75)** Her confession that she felt lonely in Paris and that she missed him might make him rejoice at her misfortune and dance over her ashes **(78)**. She wanted to hide in the trees of her lover's voice, to get rid of the cold piercing her bones and to hang to his arms to regain balance ("for without you I am a bird with broken wings and a sinking boat"), but, she adds "I was afraid you might bury me in the snows of your negligence" **(79)**

man by treating him like a child. Man has exploited the motherhood feelings of the woman and started to behave with her like a dictator. Simone de Beauvoir tried to compare the situation of women to that of other oppressed groups like the black people in America. She realized that the woman's situation is unique because women live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men - fathers or husbands - more firmly than they are to other women (See: **Introduction to the Second Sex**). She could have added that women, as al-Sabbah said in this poem, are emotionally attached to men as well, and this complicates more their situation and their struggle for freedom and equality. We should add that al-Sabbah, being an Eastern woman, cannot look at man as "other." She, in the first lines of this poem, realizes that man and woman are not two separate entities (Am I myself or am I you?). The woman here identifies with her man-lover, and the question of oppression and antagonism is marginalized because man and woman are one. The conflict between the two is like an inner conflict within the self. This stand distances al-Sabbah from feminists, especially Western feminists.

The retreat from the feminist position is more evident in the fifth poem. The persona in this poem decided to penalize her child-lover by travelling to Paris alone, but she suddenly realized that she was penalizing herself instead because Paris would not welcome her alone. Everything in Paris (street lamps, newspaper stands, statues in public gardens) was mocking her and requesting her departure because she violated the principles of the French constitution **(61)**. Paris, the persona realizes, is a musical melody played by two, a beautiful poem written by a man and a woman **(62)**.

persona in this poem asks herself certain childish questions to which she can find no answers: "Am I your lover, your mother, your queen, your possession? Am I myself or am I you?" **(49)** The motherhood in her overwhelms all other emotions, and this makes her worried about the health of her child-lover. She buys him all the magic protections (amulet) to save him from the frost of "blue eyes." She behaves with him the way a mother behaves with her child and serves him in a manner that makes him feel like an emperor. She shows her affection to him in a foolish manner like kissing him while his face is covered with shaving soap and sharing his tooth paste in moments of "realist socialism" **(50-55)**

The persona realizes that her treatment of her child-lover has turned him into a small dictator who benefits from her tenderness and her weak points and who, like a sadist child, plays with her nerves the way he plays with a paper plane. She ends by addressing him saying:

*You chaotic child*
*Who tortured me much*
*Pleased me much*
*I will not penalize you*
*For the utensils you broke*
*The curtains you burned*
*The house cat you stiffled*
*I do not blame you*
*For all this beautiful destruction*
*You brought about in my life*
*But ...I blame my motherhood* **(57)**

The implictions of this poem is that the woman has spoiled

towards exile, his face of the wilderness of her childhood, his smell of the coffee in the cafeterias of Rome (39). The persona longs to help this man whose lips have been cracked by the salt of the sea and whose body has been dispersed all over the continents after being pursued by the ships of pirates. This man (apparently a writer-poet) travels from one place of exile to another, sinks in the waves of black ink and is crucified on writing paper. He is wanted dead or alive by all the dictators of the third world (41-42). The persona longs to share in this man's suffering ("enter your open shirt/Your open wound") and to be part of his anguish, dizziness and beautiful death (43). She wants to proceed with him to the end of madness, defiance and femininity, to climb on board of his ship that acknowledges no ports and no islands and to hide him in her breasts when the tempest is so strong. She finally wants to share his destiny, either to be saved or to sink together with him (44-45).

The artistic techniques employed in this poem are those employed in modernist poetry. Emotions and feelings are presented indirectly through an objective correlative, to borrow T.S. Eliot's terms. The wandering man-Sindibad embodies the poet's (and many women's) feelings, longings, defiance, revolt, wandering, exile, anguish and madness. The imagery and diction in the poem combine the tender (sound of rain, gray eyes, childhood) and the strong (defiance, madness, tempest) to illustrate that a woman could be both weak and strong, tender and defiant, submissive and revolting. Her writing could be schizophrenic in a positive sense. It could subvert and free itself from the system by liberating the desire from both oppression and repression (See: **Selden et al. 169-170 on Deleuze and Guattari's "Schizoanalysis"**).

The woman-mother is the theme of the fourth poem. The

*And to avoid losing her blue blood*
*Her royal descent*
*And the right to live with you* **(36)**

Is the persona ironic in saying this? Most probably she is.

Different interpretations might be given to the apparent contradiction between this poem and the first one. One interpretation is that poetry is not the product of a logical process like prose. The psychological states of the poet which are not always consistent or logical are depicted in poetry without editing. T.S. Eliot, for example, has confessed that in his poetry he expressed feelings he would not express in his prose work, because in prose the writer is in control but not in poetry. Another explanation might come from French Feminists who explained that feminine writing "is exercised in a heterogeneous style that deliberately undermines all the hierarchical orders of male rationalist philosophy by breaking from the ideal of coherent meaning and good rational style" **(Rivkin and Ryan 530)**. A third interpretation is that the poet in this poem and in other poems in this collection is flattering the man to satisfy his pride after she herself has achieved freedom. It is her choice to ask man form her and not something imposed on her by man. Or it might be the return of the repressed and the fear of being silenced, slaughtered or stiffled by the tribe.

The revolutionary posture is resumed in the third poem. The persona in this poem is addressing a wandering exiled man who becomes her double. The different senses, emotions and feelings of the persona get involved in contemplating this man. His voice reminds her of the sound of rain, his gray eyes of September sky, his sadness of the sadness of birds travelling

body parallels that of nature, and all the images in the poem are drawn from nature. The female body encompasses all nature, is actually nature. The semiotic (indefinite flux of impulses), to employ Julia Kristeva's terminology, characterizes a woman's language. It is inevitably associated with the female body and the drives experienced by the child in the pre-Oedipal phase before separation from the mother (qtd. in Selden et al. 141-142). Luce Irigaray similarly explains that "woman's writing is connected with fluidity and touch, with the result that her 'style' resists and explodes all firmly established forms, figures, ideas, concepts" (qtd. in Selden et al. 145). Women's physical differences (birthing, lactation, menstruation, etc.) Irigaray argues, make them more connected with matter or with the physical world than men and give them "an identity and an experience of their own, forever apart from male power and male concepts" and abstractions (qtd. in Rivkin and Ryan 529). The language of this poem embodies the characteristics distinguishing woman's writing as described by both Kristeva and Irigaray. It is concrete, fluid, connected with matter and the physical world and arising from a female body and a female experience.

In the last part of the poem, the persona addresses the man-lover saying:

*Your hands draw me to the compass of civilization*
*And I am raised at the cushions of your tenderness*
*Like a spoiled Turkish cat*
*That sleeps the whole day*
*And hides in your arms the whole night*
*Refusig to get out to the street*
*To avoid emotional involvement*
*With other cats*

are typically feminine expressing the power of the liberated "Medusa." The last image in the poem, a surrealist one, is a good example of this power: "I will keep neighing/Like a female horse over my papers/Until I nibble the world with my teeth/Like a red apple" (28) The persona longs to encompass the world, to swallow it and to revenge the long centuries of deprivation, oppression and repression women have suffered. Her voice, she hopes, will be heard all over the world, and she will be recognized, seen, heard as a human being of transcendence. She will create and establish an imaginative space for herself in the universe of poetry.

The second poem, specially the last part, sounds like a retreat from the revolutionary stance the poet assumed in the first poem. The persona in this poem addresses the male lover telling him that her femininity is formed with his hands the way April is formed gradually, a tree at a time, a bird at a time and a flower at a time. She urges him to love her more to have her woods grow more leaves, her mountains get higher, her lips get thicker and her poems get more mad (31). The man-lover enables the persona to discover the geography of her body: its hills, springs, and clouds. He makes her more fruitful, varied, sweet, fertile and fabulous. My femininity, the persona continues, is formed with your hands like a rainbow with green, blue and orange colors. "When you complete my picture/I come out of your lips/Moistured like a rose/And transparent like a poem" (32-35).

The imagery and the diction in this poem, like those in the first poem, are typically feminine. The poet writes not only with her mind but also with her body, her senses, her feelings and emotions. It is an erotic poem that does not employ a single mundane sensual term or image. The fertility of the

from the pollution that has poisoned all rivers and thoughts and has "aborted thousands of books and thousands of intellectuals" (22).

Writing, finally, is the persona's way to express herself and to say what she cannot say to her society that has been conspiring against femininity for fifteen centuries and that enjoys listening only to male voices (cocks, horses, and oxen) (24). It is her way to get rid of the masks she has worn and of the "bundle of cheese and olives" that her mother has carried since her breasts have assumed their round form (immanence) (25).

The last part of the poem raises an important issue concerning woman's writing and its difference from man's writing. Writing for man, according to al-Sabbah, is a daily habit like smoking and fishing. A woman, on the other hand, writes in the same way she gives birth to a child and in the same enthusiasm she suckles her child. A man writes in his spare time, but the woman writes in the days of her fertility when she is overloaded with "lightning and equator fruits" (26-27). Helen Cixous, a French feminist, has argued for a postive representation of feminimity in discourse she calles "écriture feminine." She calls upon women to put their bodies in their writing as a means of liberation. The truly liberated woman, Cixous explains, will say "I overflow …. Time and again … I have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst, burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinking fortune." Woman, Cixous adds, must uncensor herself, recover "her goods, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; she must throw off her guilt" (qtd. in Selden et al. 143). We can easily trace resonances and echoes of Cixous' words in al-Sabbah's poem and vice versa. The imagery and diction employed in the poem

related to the artistic aspects of al-Sabbah's poems.

The first poem deals with the act of writing that serves multiple purposes for the poet. Through writing she can write-create the text-lover the way she chooses. This text-lover is of her own making. She draws the lines of his face as she wishes, redraws them as she wishes and says words of love to them when she wishes. The act of writing in this case is an act of Pleasure (bliss) to use the terminology of Roland Barthes. The text-lover is not transparent, and the poet is able to achieve the deepest kind of pleasure from playing with him, manipulating him and giving him the forms she chooses. The man here is a writerly text to be produced (not just read). He is a "galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds" **(qtd. in Selden et al. 158-159)**.

Writing is not only a source of pleasure, it is also a kind of exorcism and purgation. Al-Sabbah or her persona writes to find an outlet for her inner floods, to get rid of the "electric surplass that has burned my nerves and the lightening running in my arteries" **(17)**. She wishes to celebrate her first birthday as a woman in love.

Writing, moreover, is the means to enter a fantasy world and to enjoy a fantasy freedom. It is the means to escape from a harsh reality, a safety valve that prevents the persona from exploding and an only boat by which she can escape when "swallowed by the tempest." **(20)**

Writing is the persona's way to defend her femininity and to demolish the walls of the cities and the fortresses in which women have been imprisoned and threatened with persecution and death **(21)**. It is the way to free her mind from the "thousands of circles and squares" drawn around it and to escape

(9). She realizes that the different aspects of culture are interrelated and that the political, social and cultural dimensions of the ideology of a certain society are closely related. Men have monopolized not only the legal, political and economic priviliges but also the emotional initiative (10). Al-Sabbah intends to break this monopoly and to regain her right to express her emotions to the person she loves without experiencing feelings of inferiority, persecution or violation of moral principles (9). She realizes that a few Arab women have tried to break this monopoly of emotions before her and have attempted to write love poetry; however, love poetry by women written in Arabic has remained timid, reserved, hesitant "scared of the curse of society and the daggers of the tribe" (10). The writer assumes that Arabs believe in democracy (do they?) as a basis of their political systems and wonders why they do not apply democracy in emotional relations as well.

Al-Sabbah ends her introduction by addressing Arab societies (specially men) asking them to allow the woman to express her inner feelings and emotions, free the thousands of birds caged in her breast, unlock her mouth and say words of love to man without being slaughtered like a hen (12). She urges them to allow the woman, even once, through history, to realize the meaning of equality in love and to inhale the smell of freedom (12).

Has the poet been able to express her inner feelings freely in her eight love poems? Has she been less timid, reserved, hesitant and scared than other Arab women poets? To what extent has she been able to achieve "emotional democracy" in this book? Are her love poems as radical and as ambitious as her introduction-manifesto? The following discussion will center around these questions together with other questions

Sex). Feminists have provided ample examples to illustrate this point quoting from male writers and thinkers belonging to different cultures and different periods of history.

Su'ad al-Sabbah, in her introduction, is mainly concerned with the silencing of woman and the veiling not only of her face but also of her voice. Arab societies, she explains, speak out with only one voice, that of man, a salty stiff voice (6). The Arab woman up till now is not allowed to express herself freely. She still speaks with "half language, half voice, half freedom" (7). The woman's voice is still considered to be conspiring against the power of men and their rule. The "eloquent" thinking woman is still considered as an abnormal phenomenon and a malady that needs to be treated with antibiotics and other kinds of medicines (7). Western feminists have dwelt long on this issue. They have explained that the thinking writing woman has been labelled by men as a mad woman or a monster, whereas the woman who sticks to the traditional status and role of woman as a housekeeper has been called an angel.

Women, al-Sabbah makes clear, are kept in a state of immanence just satisfying their instinctual needs (eating, drinking, etc.) like animals. They are not allowed to attain transcendance (culture) like men and to participate in the game of love (a game designed to be played by two). A woman is not allowed to answer a man who expresses his love to her in a language that might be warmer, sweeter and more sincere than a man's language of love (8). Al-Sabbah calls for an "emotional equality" between man and woman since love is a human emotion and is not liable to racist or sexual discrimination (8). She also employs a political terminology demanding "emotional socialism" irrespective of any feudal, tribal or monopolist thought

from a crimson heart. A lyre envelopes the heart, the hand and the bird. This drawing combines three arts: music presented by the lyre and the fingers of the hand, painting presented by the colors, lines and movements of the drawing and writing symbolized by the feather (pen). The heart inspires these three forms of art presented in the picture as operating in unison. The bird that emergers from the heart and that is held tenderly by the writing hand is looking upward for freedom. It symbolizes the inner "springs" of the poet who longs to express her feelings and to free "the thousands of birds imprisoned in her heart" (12). The poems, one may conclude, from looking at the cover, are the outpourings of a woman's heart longng to express her innermost feelings and emotions that have been long repressed and submerged, employing different artistic techniques and materials.

The prose introduction of the book dwells on this issue of repression from which the Arab woman has been suffering throughout history and up to the present time. It makes clear that the love poems that follow constitute an attempt to demolish all the walls that have suffocated and stiffled the hearts of Arab women. Women in general, and Arab women in particular, have been marginalized and deprived of their rights, including the right to express their emotions in writing. Simone de Beauvoir and other feminists have explained the situation of women and the oppression they have suffered from due to the image men have fabricated showing women as deficient physically, emotionally and mentally and as subordinate to men made to serve and obey them. Male legislators, religious men, philosophers, writers and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of women is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth (See introduction to The Second

# Su'ad Al-Sabbah
## Qasa'id Hubb (Love Poems)
## A Critical Interpretation

*By*

*Dr. Atif Faddul*

*Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature*

*Lebanese University*

*I swerve from the old (traditional) text of femininity*

*And I invent my femininity the way I choose*

*I delineate my lips and determine the colors of my eyes the way I choose*

Qasa'id hubb (love poems) by Su'ad al-Sabbah comprises an introduction-manifesto and eight poems. The introduction clarifies the nature of the poems and the aim they intend to achieve. It is more radical than the poems which present different forms of how a woman would write love and which might sound paradoxical and puzzling to their reader.

The drawing on the cover page gives a clue to the themes of the book. It presents a hand with fingers resembling a musical instrument holding a writing pen (feather) whose tail is made of green leaves. From the hand emerges the head of a bird whose peak is directed towards the leaves. The hand stems

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*And does not invite me when I need her on my own*
*For she loves us when together ...*

**(S83)**

An epiphany is reached at the end of al-Sabbah's *Poems of Love* when the conflict between a pure, perfect, unstained female voice and a male trace, laden with centuries of authoritarian repression is resolved in the equanimity of the space of writing. There, under the aegis of amorous discourse, al-Sabbah peacefully, yet wilfully, accepts man only as a textual necessity:

*Today is Valentine's Day, the patron of lovers ...*
*And I will look, in the bookshops,*
*For a pen to offer you ...*
*And for beautiful sheets of paper that will make you love to write ...*
*And for a briefcase where you can put your sheets of paper ...*
...
*I will look for anything*
*That will spur you to write to me*
*And spur you to woo me ...*

**(S121)**

Su'ad al-Sabbah, in her *Poems of Love*, has been able, not only to produce a genuine female voice where man is a necessary but virtual *trace*, but also to create, by the same token, a space of writing where a female amorous discourse can, after centuries of silence, be represented and ultimately uttered.

value. If the Arab woman is to free herself from male domination, she must also free herself from all other authoritarian constructs. It is not Paris which constructs al-Sabbah, rather it is al-Sabbah and what she represents for a female amorous discourse which construct not only a virtual man but also a virtual Paris.

Returning back from her journey, al-Sabbah surveys the space she tried in vain to fill and confronts the reality of a writing which cares not for man-as-muse:

*- who did you have dinner with, on Saturday night?*
*- with ghosts ...*
*- who did you dance with?*
*- with ghosts, too ...*
*- what did you do, then?*
*- I cursed myself ... and I cursed you ... and I cursed Voltaire and Rousseau and Victor Hugo ...*

**(S69)**

Discovering, finally, that man is necessary, even as the female muse was necessary for male writers, al-Sabbah cries out:

*The most dangerous thing I discovered about my journey*
*Was that Paris is on your side*
*And not on mine ...*
*For she does not welcome me on my own*
*And does not meet me at the airport*
*With beautiful flowers ...*
*And does not come and visit me at the hotel*

*Nor a flower blossoming on her own ...*
*Nor a cloud raining on her own ...*
*For Paris ... is a musical composition*
*Played by two*
*And a beautiful poem*
*Written by a man ... and a woman ...*

**(S62)**

Paris also partakes of the imaginary landscape of writing, and al-Sabbah realizes that, to live in Paris-as-text, in Paris the space of writing, she has to abide by the basic rules of discourse, and shouts in anguish:

*Why didn't I respect the traditions of this fabulous city?*

**(S65)**

Paris, the fantasy of writing, the space where woman writes herself and writes her amorous discourse with the help of a voiceless yet necessary man, is but a metaphor for a white space, a zero degree of writing:

*Don't ask me details about my Paris journey*
*For there was no journey ...*
*And there were no travelers ...*

**(S68)**

Paris is in fact any place where a female voice constructs a space of writing and, as such, loses its western-like attributes. Al-Sabbah's Paris is not, as one may think, an avowal of western supremacy; on the contrary, it is the female space of writing which encompasses Paris and clothes it with discursive

As virtual muse, man is allowed to travel, through al-Sabbah's writing, from page to page:

*What can I do for you?*
*You traveler ...*
*From diaspora to diaspora.*
*You, drowning in the waves of black ink.*
*And crucified on writing paper ...*

**(S42)**

With all the above achieved, Al-Sabbah tries the ultimate test of female freedom: the creation of a space of writing where the male, even as a muse, is erased. She tries to rid herself of the last remnants of a male-dominated writing and she metaphorically — and unsuccessfully — tries to escape from her muse to Paris, the magical city of all cities:

*When I decided to punish you ...*
*And travel to Paris on my own*
*I did not know that I would be punishing myself*
*And commit the biggest mistake of my life ...*
*I did not know that Paris would refuse me if alone ...*

**(S61)**

It is clear that Paris stands for al-Sabbah's space of writing, that Paris is where the writer's voice is uttered. Not in isolation, however, for she quickly learns that if man can be silenced as voice, he, as muse, can never be completely destroyed and must always assist, albeit as a virtual entity, in the writing of amorous discourse:

*For the beautiful architecture of Paris*
*Does not accept a woman having dinner on her own ...*

Eloisa, in Pope's poem, similarly uses Abelard's image and name as a muse in order to provoke the inspirational frenzy which builds her amorous discourse. Alone in the distant nunnery, alone in the darkness of her cell, alone with her vows of silence and, finally, alone in a correspondence which only outwardly provides her with a semblance of a person to talk to, Eloisa conjures up a virtual Abelard who gives her, finally, her due, as an unwilling muse:

*Dear fatal name! rest ever unrevealed,*
*Nor pass these lips in holy silence sealed.*
*Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,*
*Where mixed with God's, his loved idea lies.*
*O write it not, my hand - the name appears*
*Already written — wash it out, my tears!*
*In vain lost Eloisa weeps and prays,*
*Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.*

**(Norton 2547, lines 9-16)**

Al-Sabbah gets further than Eloisa and unequivocally makes a real, definite, and final distinction between man as male-in-the-world and man as inspirational muse:

*I never mix*
*Between you and your hands*
*For they are peace-loving ... and you are hostile*
*And they are forgiving ... and you are a bigot ...*
*And they are educated ... and you are just mediocre ...*
*And they belong to water ... whereas you are rigid ...*
*I never mix*
*Between their modernism ... and your primitiveness*

**(S113)**

to the female, he becomes a muse. If Herodotus divides his *Histories* into nine books, each bearing the name of a muse — Clio, Euterpe, Thalia, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Erato, Polymnia, Urania, and Calliope, al-Sabbah puts her *Poems of Love* under the aegis of a male muse, a virtual presence which allows only the voice of woman to be heard:

*For when I smell the odour of your virility*
*I give birth to twenty children ...*

**(S93)**

Man as muse is actively sought by al-Sabbah for the poetic inspiration he brings forth:

*I have no luck with you.*
*For I find you either surrounded with women ...*
*Or surrounded with poetry ...*
*I find you either sleeping with a new woman ...*
*Or sleeping with a new poem ...*

**(S96)**

The muse's hands, mentioned above, are what remain of man:

*Your hands ... are the two wonderful books*
*In which I read before I go to sleep ...*

**(S108)**

and

*Thank you for the fatherhood of your hands ... sir*
*Thank you for them*

**(S114)**

*You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.*

**(31-32)**

And what if, says al-Sabbah, man becomes, for once, the virtual component of amorous discourse? What if he wears the garb of virtuality and puts himself at the service of a female voice who ultimately decides when to invoke and when to dismiss him? Al-Sabbah retains full freedom as to what she wants to do:

*For on the written leaf*
*I draw your features*
*As I wish*
*And I arrange them as I want ...*
*And I flatter them whenever I want ...*

**(S16)**

And man, in al-Sabbah's poems, ceases to exist as an individual entity or even as a representative of his gender and sees his body "scattered all over the continents" **(S40)** and, as such, can never "be seen with the naked eye" **(S92)**. At times he loses all his bodily existence and retains only his hands:

*I write this letter to your hands ...*
*For I have grown bored with writing to you ...*

**(S105)**

But al-Sabbah's utter destruction of man's voice and his virtualization as discursive entity is not gratuitous: the sacrificed male fulfills an ancient magical role traditionally ascribed

*Without your being next to me*

**(S15)**

Traditionally, woman has been put in the position of waiting, of uttering and producing discourses of absences. Placed in a virtual slot, she is removed from activity. Barthes says:

*Historically, the discourse of absence is held by the Woman: Woman is sedentary, Man is a hunter, a traveller. The Woman is faithful (she waits), man is on the move (he sails, he woos). It is Woman who gives form to absence and elaborates its function, because she has the time to; she weaves and sings; the Weavers, the canvas Songs show, at the same time, the immobility ...and the absence* **...(20)**

As such, woman has only existed as a virtual entity, outside and *inside* of amorous discourse. Walt Whitman, the champion of democracy between man and woman, gives us this poignant picture of woman as a virtual — and thus helpless — agent who has to satisfy herself with being in the position of an unseen, almost *ghostly* observer:

*Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,*
*Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;*
*Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.*
*She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,*
*She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.*
*Which of the young men does she like the best?*
*Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.*
*Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,*

sistic power to which I can even sacrifice *him*, sacrifice *myself*" **(10)**. Su'ad al-Sabbah indeed sacrifices the male on the pyre of her amorous discourse and offers him in order for her voice to be heard. Barthes speaks of the "locus" of a voice, the locus of "somebody who speaks in himself, amorously, face to face with the other (the beloved object) who does not speak" **(7)** for, indeed, does al-Sabbah's beloved other really speak? Not only is he prevented from speech for the very fact, technically speaking, that he is only a *pronoun* with no textual reality, but also because he is not permitted, even as a pronoun, to enter into any meaningful dialogical exchange. Al-Sabbah's lover is always *spoken to*, never speaking, never given a voice.

In fact, the love experience becomes, through the medium of writing, a discourse of absence. Kristeva says that this experience forever ties the symbolic (what is forbidden, discernable, thinkable), the imaginary (what the I represents to sustain and develop itself) and the real (this impossible where all affects aspire to everything and where there is nobody to grasp the fact that I am only a part). Strangled in this tight knot, reality vanishes ...**(16-17)**

Where no reality exists, no *other* can exist either. Kristeva raises the problem of the *incarnation* of the other in the amorous text: "The beloved is not there, but I experience his body; in the state of amorous incantation, I am united to him, sensually *and* ideally" **(120)**. How this is felt by al-Sabbah can be appraised when she writes:

*For I can invoke you*
*Without your being here.*
*And I can touch you*

*The important is what I write myself ...*
*For writing is, to me,*
*A dialogue I address to myself*
*Before I address it to you ...*

**(S15)**

Indeed, in the amorous discourse, the other is only a device in the narcissistic drive for voice. And the representation of the other, in the case of al-Sabbah, the male, succumbs to the female voice. Barthes masterfully says:

> *Amorous discourse smothers the other, who finds no place for his own voice beneath this massive speech. It is not that I prevent him from speaking; it is that I know how to slide the pronouns: 'I speak and you listen, therefore we are' ...(The other is disfigured by his mutism, like in those horrible dreams where some loved one appears to us with the lower part of his face totally erased, devoid of a mouth; and I, who speaks, am disfigured too: the soliloquy makes of me a monster, an enormous tongue.)* **(198)**

The monstrosity Barthes speaks about is that of a voice which becomes so self-centered that it ceases to be accepted as "normal" and, as I have shown above, becomes the "scandal" of a female speech which puts itself in the center and, what is more, also in the periphery. Kristeva says that in love, " 'I' has been another" **(13)** and what this means as well is that the other has always been "I" in an amorous discourse which is a "[h]ymn to the total gift of oneself to the other" but at the same time a "hymn to the narcis-

Not only is the voice self-reflexive but it also ignores the other and, here, in al-Sabbah's poetry, the other is man who loses his manhood to become a mere poetic device. Bakhtine's monologism comes to mind, not only because poetic discourse is monologic and authoritarian, given without compromise to one intention, absolute and oblivious of the other (17), but also in the context of a female writing which wilfully chooses to be uttered irrespective of man's essence. Al-Sabbah's contribution to the Bakhtinian dialogue resides precisely in this fact, that a monologism which was uni-dimensionally linked to the writing of poetry becomes a gender monologism which, alone, can give woman back her voice. Monologism, in this context, becomes *necessary*. Bakhtine beautifully says:

> *In poetic works, language fulfills itself as indubitable, peremptory, encompassing all. Through it, through its internal forms, the poet sees, understands, meditates. When he expresses himself, nothing in him requires the need to call for an "other" or "foreign" language. The language of poetic genre is a Ptolemaic world, alone and unique, out of which there is nothing, and nothing is needed.* (108)

As such, al-Sabbah's writing, like all poetic language — but more so because it is the voice of a woman who decides, consciously, to posit herself in a center where the male, for once, is at the periphery — becomes a narcissistic dialogue where the beloved is but an excuse:

> *I write this letter to you*
> *And I don't expect an answer.*
> *Your answer doesn't really matter.*

Wondering about the newly-discovered power of the written word, she exclaims:

*Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid,*
*Some banished lover, or some captive maid;*
*They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,*
*Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires,*
*The virgin's wish without her fears impart,*
*Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart,*
*Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,*
*And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.*

**(Norton 2547-48, lines 51-58)**

But the amorous language, in order to achieve its full strength, in order for Kristeva's "impossibility" to become a possibility of writing, has ultimately to look back at itself, to re-enter into its own game of writing and come back afresh with salvational power. If man has ignored the other, the woman, in his discourse, why can't the woman, says al-Sabbah, do the same? She asks: "Why can man play with the leaves of love on his own without giving woman the chance to participate in the game and try her luck?" **(S8)**. Why not, indeed, become the center again, the long-forgotten center? Kristeva speaks, in this context, of an "I" which is not, paradoxically, the same as the ego:

*Love is the time and space where "I" permits itself to be extraordinary. Sovereign without even being individual. Divisible, lost, annihilated; but also, through the* ***imaginary*** *fusion with the beloved, equal to the infinite spaces of a super-human psyche. Paranoid? I am, in love, at the zenith of subjectivity.* **(14)**

The female voice, like long-imprisoned "electrical surplus," has to find an outlet. It is not surprising, then, that the most famous correspondence in the history of literature is that between Heloise and Abelard. And it is not surprising either that this correspondence is of an amorous nature, a correspondence between lovers. And it is obvious, to any perspicacious reader, that Abelard's letters, when compared to those of Heloise, are almost devoid of any human passion or even of genuine concern or emotion. Abelard's interests rest in making sure that Heloise is, in the seclusion of her nunnery, materially comfortable. Beyond this, not much. And it is against such a wall of silence, even coming from a lover, that Heloise writes and makes her voice heard even now, centuries later. Alexander Pope, in his poem "Eloisa to Abelard," perfectly understood Heloise's plight and has her (he calls her Eloisa) write the following as a response to her lover, in words not dissimilar to al-Sabbah's own mentioned above. It is interesting to notice that it is writing, with Eloisa and with al-Sabbah, which fills the lover's absence and which creates a space where woman's voice can be uttered:

*In vain lost Eloisa weeps and prays,*
*Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.*

**(Norton 2547, lines 15-16)**

Only writing can help her out of her prison of stone, a prisoner of a system which does not allow women to live their lives:

*Yet write, oh write me all, that I may join*
*Griefs to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine.*

**(Norton 2547, lines 41-42)**

monologism and dialogism, *Aesthetics and the Theory of the Novel*, differs from both Kristeva and Barthes and writes that, in poetic genres,

> *literary conscience ...is entirely realized in its language; it is entirely immanent to it, expresses itself in it directly and spontaneously, without restrictions or distances. The language of the poet is his own. He finds himself in it in all his entirety, without sharing. He uses each form, each word, each expression in their direct meaning ("without quotation marks," so to speak), that is to say, like the pure and spontaneous expression of his aim. Whatever the "verbal sighs" suffered by the creating poet, the language of the work created is an obedient instrument, totally appropriate to its author's design.* **(108).**

Whether the amorous discourse is an "impossibility" or a "coded disorder" or the "obedient instrument" of the poet, it remains that writing, especially for al-Sabbah, is a powerful flow that tries to break free from centuries of oppression:

*I want to write ...*
*To get rid of my inner floods ...*
*That have destroyed all my dams.*
*I want to get rid of the electrical surplus*
*That burns my nerves ...*
*And of these lightnings*
*That run in my veins*
*And can find no way out*

**(S17)**

*I want to write ...*
*To break free from thousands of circles and squares*
*Which they have drawn around my mind ...*
*And to get out of the belt of pollution*
*Which has poisoned all rivers*
*And all minds ...*

**(S22)**

Barthes' description of the imagery of amorous discourse fits into a more female model of writing. In fact, the amorous text is the work of "agitated" female spirits:

> *Every figure explodes, vibrates alone like a sound cut from any melody — or repeats itself again and again, like the motif of a hovering music. No logic links the figures, nor determines their contiguity: they are out of the syntagm, out of the narrative; they are Erinyes [in Greco-Roman mythology, one of a group of goddesses of vengeance]; they get agitated, bump into each others, calm down, come back, go away, with no more order than a fly of mosquitoes. The amorous* ***dis-cursus*** *is not dialectical; it revolves like a perpetual calendar, an encyclopedia of affective culture.* **(Barthes 10)**

Implicitly agreeing with Kristeva, Barthes keeps amorous discourse on a level distinct from any other discourse: "the lover speaks in sentence packets, but he does not integrate these packets into a higher level, into a work; it is a horizontal discourse: no transcendence, no saving grace, no novel (but a lot of romanesque)" **(11)**.

However, Mikhaïl Bakhtine, in his monumental study on

*the impression of finally talking, for the first time, for real. But is it really to say anything?* (12)

In such a dilemma, the writing of love, of its words and letters, becomes equated with an evil that has to be borne inside the writer (Kristeva 15) and, as I will be showing throughout this paper, it is against such an evil, both outside and inherent to the process of writing itself, that al-Sabbah is set out to battle.

Roland Barthes, in his magisterial *Fragments of an Amorous Discourse*, is aware of the intrinsic difference between amorous discourse and any other discourse. He announces in his introduction:

*It matters little, at the end, that the dispersal of the text is rich here and poor there; there are empty places, many figures stop short; some others, being hypostases of all amorous discourse, have the rarity – the poverty – of essences ... But the one who holds this discourse and divides its episodes does not know that a book will be made of it; he does not know yet that as a straight cultural subject he must neither repeat himself, nor contradict himself, nor take the whole for the part; he only knows that what comes to his mind at such and such a moment is* ***marked****, like the trace of a code.* (8)

In a text where passion is the *mot d'ordre*, disorder is *de rigueur* and the amorous voice, through the medium of the text, is almost free from the constraints of language. What is written tries to approximate what is felt. Al-Sabbah equates the unnecessary dryness of discourse with a male concept of authority:

*As she gives birth ...*
*And with the same excitement ...*
*As she donates her milk.*

**(S26-27)**

Such is the pent up energy stored inside her, and inside every woman deprived of voice, that she does not hesitate to present herself in animalistic terms:

*I will keep neighing*
*As a mare above my leaves ...*
*Until I bite the earth*
*Like a red apple ...*

**(S28)**

Julia Kristeva, in her *Stories of Love*, says a propos of the Bible's "Song of Songs" that in the poem, for the first time ever, woman speaks to her king, husband, or God **(126)**. And it is interesting to note that this first time, this birth, is marked by a language of love, by an amorous language. Yet this language, paradoxically, is "[i]mpossible, inadequate, immediately allusive when one would want it the most direct; amorous language is a flight of metaphors: it is literature" **(9)**. But it is as such, as an impossible language, that amorous discourse becomes a challenging of language itself, a challenge "of its univocality, of its referential and communicative power" **(10)**. A kaleidoscopic voice, amorous discourse defies time:

> *Vertigo of identity, vertigo of words: love is, on the scale of the individual, this sudden revolution, this irremediable cataclysm about which one talks only* ***later****. On the spur of the moment, one does not talk* ***of*** *it. One has only*

*I want to write ...*

*...*

*And abort thousands of books ...*
*And thousands of intellectuals*

**(S22)**

The female voice is, from the very beginning, problematized in no uncertain terms. Writing is the way to break free from the hold of a colonizing aggressor:

*I want to write ...*
*To defend every inch of my femininity ...*
*Occupied by a colonizer*
*Who has yet to leave ...*
*For writing is the means*
*For me to break what I was not able to break ...*

**(S21)**

The desire to write is equated with birth and reaches its paroxysm when al-Sabbah draws a critical distinction not only between two genders, but also between two modes of writing. She says:

*Accept my apologies ...*
*If I am moody ... and nervous ...*
*And savage of words ...*
*Writing, to a man,*
*Is a daily habit like smoking ...*
*And fishing ...*

*But for a woman ...*
*She writes the same way*

(qtd in Huughe 867), and the written Arabic language cannot possibly be the language of women (Huughe 870). Indeed, attempts by Arab women to transgress the established male voice can only be understood as betrayal (Fayyad 147). To the Kuwaiti poetess Su'ad al-Sabbah, writing in Arabic,

> *[i]f woman's right of normal speech is refused, and hated, and treated as strange in the bloated male societies, then speaking of love, in these societies, is seen as a great scandal, and as a sin.* (S5)

and

> *[t]he Arab society still regards...woman's voice as a conspiracy against the rule of man and his supremacy, and sees the "literate" woman as an abnormal or pathological case to be treated with medicine and antibiotics.* (S7)

Yet, al-Sabbah presents her poems as "poems of love that know no boundaries" (S5), for the female voice, long associated with notions of shame and honor, has now to emerge from a "long dumbness" (S6) and woman has to re-use her voice, training it like a long-forgotten tool (S6).

Su'ad al-Sabbah's strategy, in her *Poems of Love*, is to invert the traditional male handling of voice and to create an amorous language which, through its monologism, achieves a narcissistic quality where the beloved male is represented as essentially absent, a virtual muse in woman's space of writing, allegorized here in another virtualized western city, Paris.

Amorous language is what *Poems of Love* is about and it is, before anything else, a written language. "I want to write" is the most recurring line in the collection and the birth of writing, coupled with the death of the authoritarian male concept of discourse, is heralded at every corner of the book:

*Love has unbound my limbs and set me shaking,*
*A monster bitter-sweet and my unmaking.*
*(Sappho, Higham 211)*

It is known that the West did not pay any significant attention to modern Arabic literature until after World War II, and that women figures were very few to be recognized as such. Atika al-Khazraji, labeled as "the uncrowned queen of modern poetry" by S. A. Khulusi, and Nazik al-Mala'ika were two of the most famous Arab women poetesses **(Altoma 8)**. In the contemporary arena, Nawal al-Sa`dawi has become one of the most translated Arab writers, male or female **(Amireh 216)**.

Yet, according to Susan Darraj, Arab women's voices have been subjected to a western feminist gaze that has tried to impose its own representations of what a woman voice should be, not necessarily out of a feeling of superiority, but sometimes out of ignorance. In fact, many American women, as Darraj suggests, would be surprised to know that Arab feminism has a long and impressive history. Figures such as Fay Afaf Kanafani, Hanan al-Shaykh, Fatima Mernissi, Ahdaf Soueif, Leila Sabbar, and Huda Sha`rawi, have duly diagnosed gender inequality in Arab society.

From Lebanese writers like Nadia Tueini, Venus Khoury-Ghata, and Emily Nasrallah, to Moroccan novelists like Jamila Debêche, Aïcha Lemsine, and Mina Boumedine, to Assia Djebar's liberation of the Algerian woman, Arab women writers have staunchly held their own voice against indifference, disregard, and outright castigation. To Djebar, a woman who writes within an Arab culture is just one thing: a scandal

# Su-'ad al-Sabbah and the Space of Writing

Paul Jahshan, Ph.D.
Notre Dame University, Lebanon

**Abstract**

Arab women writers have had to fight a double battle, one as women trying to overcome a discourse dominated by a male voice, and one as women belonging to a culture which is viewed by "the West" as actively contributing to the keeping of the status quo. Su'ad al-Sabbah's strategy, in her *Poems of Love*, is to invert the traditional male handling of voice and to create an amorous language which, through its monologism, achieves a narcissistic quality where the beloved male is represented as essentially absent, a virtual muse in woman's space of writing, allegorized here in another virtualized western city, Paris.

of the whole collection may be summed up as the combination of the erotic with the ideological in a harmonious poetic texture whcrcin the female is made to feel fully equal with the male 'other' – indeed, she discovers in him motherly and fatherly dimensions.

This is a profound experience – an involvement with identity, with social, cultural and artistic dimensions – which Soad El-Sabah has vowed to elevate and to communicate to the 'other'. Perhaps, she might have thought, the experience will change the present state of man, and redirect his steps towards civilization and love: perhaps it will take him back to nature, remove those barriers standing between his body and real sensations, between his heart and real 'pulse', and between his eyes and real vision. Can there be a more fruitful means than poetry for the expression of a human experience intensified to the point of involvement – which alone enables the poet to be truly creative and to grasp the truth?

speaks. In the text of the poem, however, she goes back to the indivisible love partnership: she has none but him, and he none but her. She elaborates, however, giving minute details of the love-scene, using the Western Valentine legend in handling her theme. She identifies her lover with that love Saint who represents Nature, culture, liberation from captivity, creativity, invariance and enfranchisement. Ultimately, however, she sees in him only joy, love, and the language of fertility, to the point of identifying herself with Ashtoreth and him with Tammuz. She gives him offerings, and burns incense in his temple, and washes his feet with citrus perfume. Still, she divests him of the fabled sanctity of Valentine and declares that he is a human saint, teaching joy, love and the language of life and nature.

Though impelled by poetic suffering and poetic visions, and in full control of the poetic scene, unfolding it with enjoyable facility; and though explicitly expressing her erotic emotions and the turbulent physical desires, the poet gives prominence throughout to her ideological and existential position, both in the volume as a whole and in each individual poem. As a woman, she does not lack love, and she can indulge her secret passion, safe from the authority of censors and the restrictions of the traditional game, especially imposed on the female and the female body. As men, we are mostly unsympathetic towards women. The reason is that we do not feel the spiritual and physical burdens which having a female 'self' and a female identity entails. That is why we perceive a strident tone in these poems by Soad El-Sabah when she expresses her feelings about freedom and her clash with the body and culture, as well as her ultimate resort to kindness and nature. However, her passion towards the 'other', even when expressing a whispered 'pure' love, still sounds so strident. The tenor

with kindness and warmth, and fatherhood, with implications of security and protection, even without the abnegation of physical desires. These are mostly given an aesthetic elevation in her poetry, by virtue of rhetorical devices, whether directly expressed or in subtle references.

This reminds us of a little-known aspect of her life, though previously handled by me in an independent study. She had been in love with the 'knight' who gave her the reassurance of established values and protection. With his death, her love for him was re-channelled towards her son who, ironically, also died. She was saved by her poetry, seeking in it a liberation from 'protection', from both death and grief. Through poetry she came to feel her feminine identity which sought nothing beyond freedom in a world biased in favour of the male, and in a culture opposed to the recognition of the 'other', especially if the 'other' was a helpless female. The following apostrophe occurs at the conclusion of her eighth and last poem:

*O Saint who taught me*
*The alphabet of love*
*From A to Z,*
*And painted me in the shape of a rainbow*
*Connecting earth and sky,*
*Who taught me the language of trees,*
*The language of rain,*
*And the blue language of the sea*
*I love you,*
*I love you,*
*I love you.*

As you see, she stresses the sanctity, the alphabetism and joy of love, as well as the 'language of nature' which love

It is possible, of course, to rationalise the motherly feelings of the poet towards her lover, and to rationalize her feeling of the fatherliness of his hands (their capacity for protecting the female). But we are not dealing here with facts or with reality as dealt with in the poem: we are rather handling something beyond the real, a surrealistic world wherein feelings and sensations are interwoven to form a single poetic wreath, with the strands drawn and braided from her depths.

The conclusion of the poem is not less surrealistic than the imagery. We may be able to understand that the hands are two books, or two jungles, to which the poet may resort if depressed; or that they are two floating logs of woods to which she may cling if overwhelmed by the waves, or two fireplaces where she may coil up in cold weather. But how could we understand the conclusion unless helped by a surrealistic interpretation? For the poet here asks her lover to greet his hands if he comes across them by chance at an airport or a café.

The poet's vision of the lover and his hands is close enough to a surrealistic painter's vision, when, in the painting, the hands are put on one side and the rest of the person on the other. There is a series of contrasts which reveal a feeling of the value and the special world of the hands, poetically, and in a manner involving the memory's passion for the tactile sense – with all the impressions, emotions and memories associated with it. This is why the poet begins by saying she is addressing the poem to her lover's hands, and by including the hands in the title itself.

Love thus becomes in her poetry a sublimation, to use a technical term, of sex and the physical instincts to higher emotions, such as motherhood, a sense of 'past existence' replete

restraint, shackles liberty, confines femaleness, outlaws dialogue and precludes pluralism.

All this is embodied in the lover and his hands. Both image and symbol are surrealistically handled to produce a constructivist painting with the hands as the leitmotif, and the rest of the body 'variations' on the same theme. The surrealistic structure is therefore the core of this painting-poem:

*If you leave for any place in the world,*
*Take all your baggage*
*But leave your hands.*
*Your hands have always been*
*The doves of peace*
...
*I visit your hands*
*When you are not at home*
*And share with them my morning coffee*
*And reveal to them*
*All my longing and chagrin.*

Just as she feels motherly towards him, she feels the fatherliness of her lover's hands:

*I am thankful for the fatherliness*
*Of your hands, master ...*
*They were my home*
*In my time of vagrancy,*
*A roof over my head*
*When the storm struck my very homeland*
*When the homeland carpet*
*Was pulled from under my feet.*

air, freedom and civilization, in contradistinction from that of the hands whose innumerable implications pervade the poetry of belonging and parenthood. She says:

*They act in a civilized manner*
*But you act like a primitive man.*

The play on the pronouns here alerts us to the subtle implications of the ways in which the poet's imagination and feelings work. The hands represent the beautiful love values, while the man himself represents tyranny and the tendency to enslave his woman, not in an independent institution, but within the lover himself. His hands

*... open a thousand doors for dialogue*
*but you shut all the doors in my face!*
...
*I seek protection in your strong hands*
*When no one shall protect me.*
*The hands are positive; the man is negative:*
*Your hands have always been with me ...*
*But you act like any Arab ruler*
*Who does not believe in the 'other' opinion,*
*Nor in the other view*
*Nor in the other sex*
*Or like any tribal chief*
*Who speaks of shura – of pluralism and open dialogue*
*But never has a dialogue with anybody*
*Nor ever consult anyone.*

As you can see, she makes the lover an alternative to nature, with keen interest in kindness, beauty and the good, though, in representing the traditional system, he restricts kindness with

*And beget twenty children.*

This poem is concluded with an epistle, devoted to the hands of the beloved. It is as though he had a personality and his hands had another. The poem is a surrealistic image of the tactile memory and the tactile sense itself. It is fresh and exquisite. I have never read a poem dealing with the tactile memory and the tactile sense, within the realm of love poetry, like this one. She says:

*I address this poem to your hands*
*Yes, your hands.*
*Your hands are kinder than you*
*More perceptive of the nature of women*
*And their secrets*
*And their inner worlds.*

Note the 'kindness', the nature of women, their secrets and their inner worlds. What we have here is a love-language using touch as a tool. It is touch that can discover the hidden feelings and the inner depths of women's nature. The key to all this is the hands of the lover. She says:

*They are the sand beach on which I recline*
*When hit by the storm;*
*They are the two palm-trees which I shake,*
*When in labour,*
*And the ripe dates luscious fall.*

Here is a double image of the lover – himself and his hands. The latter is especially fascinating. The contrast helps to draw a picture of the lover that the previous poem lacks: it is the picture of the male, who prevents the poet from enjoying the

*Or full of verse!*
*Either sleeping with a new woman*
*Or sleeping with a new poem!*

But her lover does not take any physical form, in the final analysis, nor does he need to take any such form. He is apparently closer to an ideal or a type than to a real thing. Not that he is an idea, as the tradition of Platonic love would make him, but rather the poet's twin – in love, liberty, creativity, beauty-worship, and outward-looking and travel. It is possible that he has real-life origins, but the poet raises him to the level of an ideal or type.

Let me repeat that the image of her beloved develops the old knight, the guardian of traditional values, into a modern knight of creativity and freedom. If she smells the scent of this new man, she says, she will beget twenty children!

For her a lover need not be a physical presence – a person – for she gives him enough qualities to turn him into a human paragon of creativity, freedom and love. Still her poetic text evokes erotic feelings alive with the joy of recollected sense impressions. It is an aesthetic joy which tempers the abstract mode attempted by the poet, or the lack of concretization in the poem, as I have mentioned:

*It is not important*
*That you should be a physical entity*
*For I munch you in my dreams*
*Like a fruit*
*And feel the sugar dripping*
*On the walls of my memory ...*
*I smell the scent of your virility*

We should note how the erotic impulse merges with the cultural situation: abandoning the camel-hair bed and reclining on the weeds of her beloved's chest. Flouting the old 'text' of femaleness, as she calls it, leads to her new 'text': to reject the old 'cloak' is to reject slavery, and to put on the beloved's cloak is to regain her rightful and equally free status as woman. She says:

*I emerge from the heart of superstition,*
*From the teeth of the tribal chief,*
*Taking off my old Chinese shoes*
*In which both mind and feet have been confined*
*And accompany you to Liberty's End.*

Liberty is therefore the new 'text' of femaleness: a female is no longer a body or a meal but a full partner in love, life and freedom.

The poet gives us another image of her beloved in the sixth poem, having sketched him in the third. For all the variations, the core of both is the same. The basic qualities are expressed in a variety of sensuous or rhetorical figures but are substantially the same. In the earlier poem the sea salt water dries up his lips; in the present one, he is made to marry the sea, an image implying outward-looking and voyaging. There are variations too in the themes of creativity, writing, love and freedom. She says:

*You are exhausted, my man, with your narcissism*
*And your multiple affairs!*
*There is little room for me there,*
*I find you either full of women*

here a little bolder.

Together with a creative vanguard belonging to the same or previous generation – such as Colette Khoury, Leila Ba'lbaki, Ghadah El-Samman, and Ahlam Mustaghanmi – Soad El-Sabah has managed to give woman a distinctive voice and a rival presence. Female creativity is now a fact: most of the names given above had adopted the novel as the literary genre fit for mounting their rebellion against the conditions of a ready-made culture, where the female is kept in the bottle of Aladdin and the male assumes the rôle of giant.

May Ziadah used poetry, correspondence and physical presence (in her literary circle in Cairo) as well as her dialogues with the male geniuses of her time, in establishing what Soad El-Sabah is trying to accomplish: equal rights in liberty, life, love, and writing for both men and women.

However, Soad El-Sabah has gone a little further. Her lexicon, imagery and poetic pulse have removed all barriers. She declares that she is 'involved', has 'committed' a new act of defiance to the ready-made cultural stances. She repaints her own image and the images of her beloved, of the censor, and of all opposition in the light of the new vision. It is this vision that enables her to bear the consequences of involvement in emotion, the body, culture, existence, art and poetry. Expressing her attitude, she says:

*I flout the old 'text' of femaleness*
*I invent my femaleness in the way I like ...*
*I get out of the cloak of Antarah Ibn Shaddad,*
*And put on your cloak*
*I abandon my camel-hair bed*
*And recline on the weeds of your chest.*

*Or, I believe, ever to be committed.*
*I get involved with you*
*To the point of no return*
*And walk with no umbrella*
*In the rains of the scandal.*

Two words are worthy of note in the opening of the sixth poem. The first is 'commit', usually associated with 'crime'. It is as though the woman's exercise of her right to love and to life was a kind of 'committal' or 'commission' (of a crime) in today's common usage; but the poet is supported by the rhetoric of the Quran, no less.

The second word (scandal) refers to an image or a state of mind imposed by a threadbare culture on the female, forcing her to feel scandalized by the emotion of love. It is as though it were sinful for a woman to *feel*, to 'get involved' and as though love must inevitably lead to vice. Slavery implies obedience – an ethical code imposed on the female by the Scriptures. How can love be a 'scandal' when it is the noblest emotion in the hearts of all living beings?

The poet is conscious of her 'involvement', and the concomitant dilemma. She would not shy away, however, from the 'scandal', thus 'committed', as long as it will establish the 'self' and reveal the identity, fighting for a human partnership based on lofty values – love, liberty and life.

All the sweethearts made to speak by the Arabic poets down the centuries, from Omar Ibn Abi Rabi'ah to Nizar Qabbani, have been shy enough. Some did express themselves, but the tradition of silence persisted. Only in Nizar Qabbani does the voice of woman make itself heard – and

She focuses on Paris from which the beloved is absent, though everything in the scene reminds her of his presence, so that, feeling his absence, she becomes only too conscious of his presence. He is never too far from her, just as she is never far enough from the love model, or from the broken patterns of love. She cannot bear being away from him, and soon enough goes back to apologize for that sin. Deep down she is still afraid of losing that 'battle'. She is with him but cannot reach him. He is far off but always present. The choice of the Parisian scene for the drama of absence and presence may be influenced by the fascination a large section of the Arab elite has for the city, but the focus here is on the emotional model, whilst the older models had been intellectual, economic and political.

The opening of the sixth poem is drenched in 'romantic' feeling; she 'picks up a moon' from the 'space' of the poem, and a poem from the 'roof of the moon', then goes back to stress her involvement in love as a civilized condition. However, involvement in love as an emotional attitude leads to psychological, cultural and artistic involvement.

She declares her involvement in love as an existential condition, and as a means of declaring her independence, her ability to exercise her right to love and to live the life she seeks, to the point of overstating the case. She is helped along by a consciousness that she is playing an unprecedented role, and she explicitly states this:

*I rise to spaces*
*Never before attempted by a woman*
*I commit words of love*
*Never before committed by an Arab woman*

One may be astonished at first glance to hear of this kind of love, just as one is surprised to hear of Platonic love or courtly love as going against the grain. Platonic love is intellectual rather than physical; its consummation occurs intellectually, outside the realm of lust. Courtly love never leads to marriage, in the Arab tradition, and so continues to be alive, the desire therein for ever burning for the other. The spiritual escalation means that desire is satisfied through expression, leading to liberation, and through poetry, turning it into a holy psalm.

Consider the meaning of the motherly emotion in El-Sabah and how it dominates all other emotions in her love; and consider how she feels the *consequent* fatherly emotion overflowing from the hands of the beloved, even without ceasing to express physical lust! It is as though we are facing a different level of love. It has been described as civilized love, and it thus appears and takes shape, occupying a position just after Platonic love and courtly love.

In real life in the Arab world we often hear a wife calling her husband 'my brother' or 'my father'. Calling a sweetheart 'my sister' is part of the oriental love tradition.

The epistolary art is interwoven with the art of poetry in the fifth 'song of love'. This is a poem relying on presence and absence, and how the two poles are related in love. The beloved begins by 'punishing' her lover, but is unconsciously 'punishing' herself. The scene chosen for this drama is Paris, the capital of love. The action takes place with a definite sense of immediacy – as though it is taking place here and now, rather than recalled or recollected. She paints scenes of loneliness for both men and women. Her brush picks up the Parisian model of love which includes the two parties in the game.

*Motherhood within me*
*Dominates all other emotions.*

The poem goes on to explore the love relationship between the mother and her son: she cares and *fears* for him, primarily. This was noted in my early study, indicating that the image was unprecedented. It is a feature closely related to the revolutionary nature of the poet, though her belonging to humanity and human values never abates. Love for her is therefore different: it is the queen of all values from which the new life springs.

Driven by a sense of vocation rather than by lust, what could this poet do when her sweetheart turns into a little dictator, or an anarchist child, other than turn herself into a mother capable of restoring the balance to life and things? How else could she 'harness' the 'lightnings' 'galloping' in her veins? How could she give the right care and attention to her spoilt child except through her sense of vocation, writing and love?

As in the above poem, to be analysed later, the poet devotes a whole poem to the hands of the beloved. The meanings given to his hands include care and fatherly kindness. How could she then harbour motherly feelings towards him but *consequently* feel his fatherly emotions towards her? This double feeling (of her motherliness and his fatherliness) sums up what has been described as 'civilized' love. Is it not then an elevation of lustful and instinctive emotions to other levels of love? It is one of the visions of this creative poet in dealing with love that is not to be found in any other poet, male or female. What it means in effect is not so much a denial of physical desire as the exploration of another dimension even whilst maintaining the original lust!

is embarking on an adventure, and is sacrificing her societal security so as to achieve inner purity and her sense of vocation. At the conclusion of her third poem she says:

*I would like to get on board your ship*
*Which recognizes no harbour,*
*Recognizes no islands,*
*Nor anchors anywhere;*
*I would like to hide you in my bosom,*
*When the wind blows amain*
*And the tempest strikes hard:*
*Either survive with you*
*Or drown with you.*

At the opening of the fourth poem she once again asks the central questions which reveal themselves in multiple mirrors, but which all spring from a single self where the lover is the beloved and the beloved the lover, in a rhetorical question. Love is not a physical meal where the male devours the female or the female the male. It is a kind of motherhood. She thus begins her fourth poem:

*I have for long asked myself*
*Child-like questions:*
*Am I your sweetheart*
*Or your mother?*
*Am I your queen*
*Or your bond maid?*
*Am I, am I ..*
*Or am I you?*

She hastens to admit:

*I come out of your lips*
*As a rose, all wet,*
*As a poem, transparent..*

Just as the body *is* both joy and fertility, neither can be achieved except through love. Love for her is civilization, and civilization is love that lies at the basis of existence, of all being, and the world at large.

Consequently, the image of the 'lover' has changed. He is no longer the old knight, the guardian of values, who would 'abduct' or capture the beloved. Rather, his voice reminds her of the sound of rain, and his wistfulness recalls the silent sorrow of a bird flying away into exile. Each is persecuted, chased away by the 'value pirates' or sea pirates. Even though the salt sea water has dried up his lips, he continues to be submerged in the black sea waves, crucified on the writing paper, wanted dead or alive by the tyrants. The fight for freedom is madness, and defiance will result in alienation and exile. However, the attainment of identity and the harmony between the female and the male fighting for freedom and going into exile (a harmony forged in the cause of 'becoming' and integrity) constitute a worthy purpose for taking risks and making sacrifices. The sense of vocation takes precedence over the joy engendered by any kind of lust; so that love, as a civilized instinct, is the yardstick. Though the poet does not deprive us of feeling the ecstasy of sensuous joy in her imagery, and her general performance, she focuses on the vocation, writing, freedom, and the sense of becoming for the new man in his twofold form comprising both Adam and Eve. The beloved is identified with the man fighting for the same sense of 'becoming' for which the beloved is willing to take such risks. She

*The geography of my body*
*One hillock after another*
*And every fountain therein ...*
*I owe you*
*All the almonds I have,*
*All the peaches,*
*All the apples,*
*And such variety in my climes,*
*And such sweetness in my fruit!*

The poet is not blindly biased in favour of the feminine and against the masculine as a reaction to the *harem* culture which destroys the body, the self and civilization itself for hedonistic ends. She rather recreates the joy of communion, the unity of the seed of creation (though apparently divided into male and female) through the love instinct which takes shape in the womb of civilization not in the tremulous flashes of sex. Later in the same poem she says:

*In your hands*
*I join the civilization circle.*

Though essentially intent on fixing the female identity vis-à-vis the male, the poet never divides the single seed, never tears up the common 'becoming'. The very shaping of femaleness in her poetry is bound up with the presence of the male 'other; the tremors of joy and fertility would never have been there but for a sense of deep belonging to such partnership. She says:

*My femaleness takes shape in your hands*
*Just as the rainbow takes shape ...*
*When you have finished painting me*

division, and to maintain its integrity through love. Passion is therefore a means of becoming, and the writing of poetry is a means of attaining beauty and freedom.

Writing for Soad El-Sabah is a means of achieving freedom, because it enables her to rid her psyche and nervous system of the sense of slavery and chagrin in a community that cares only for cockerels, bulls and stallions. Her 'explosive' soul erupts on paper – an act of exercising freedom, the consciousness of 'becoming', the recognition of identity, and the right to life and love. She says:

*I want to write*
*To release my internal floods,*
*Having pulled down all the dams;*
*I want to discharge the surplus electricity*
*Which is burning in my nerves,*
*Galloping in my arteries,*
*But finding no outlet.*

Love for her is therefore not a physical impulse but a discovery of the body with a different identity. It is an expression of a civilized instinct that merges Adam and Eve in a single creature. At the opening of the second poem, the poet states this explicitly:

*My femaleness takes shape in your hands*
*Just as April takes shape*
*In one tree after another.*

The entire poem is based on this discovery, together with joy and a sense of vitality. She says:

*In your hands I first discovered*

answer them but rather ask them again, with the poet, so as to recognize her distinct world and hidden pulse. Those who have read my early study entitled "The invisible face of Soad El-Sabah' should have realized my familiarity with her poetic world, and my attempt to explore its apparent features and intractable spirit. The present review of the above collection will maintain the exploratory approach, without, of course, disregarding the conclusions of the above study.

The poet begins her 8-poem collection with a poem on writing. The act of writing, for her, is in itself a message of love – the love which, she says, 'neighs' in her veins and 'weaves' the words on paper. It is, however, a passion with a wider meaning than that we may find in a dictionary: its direction is more purely emotional than physical, and it speaks not of sex but of freedom, identity and writing in a society where freedom is suppressed, the identity of women is unrecognized, and self-expression only the right of the male. Writing for her is therefore a declaration of independence, a recognition of identity, and an exercise of her stolen liberty.

The conclusion of the poem may be seen, in fact, as giving depth to all this with an aesthetic touch expressing both triumph and joy. She says:

*I will continue to neigh*
*Like a filly over my papers*
*Until I have taken a bite of this globe*
*As though it were a red apple!*

The passion here is not physical lust, but rather a 'neighing' for freedom. It is a cry for both identity and 'becoming' within a hostile culture; a cry for the indivisible 'Self' to resist

# Soad El-Sabah
## and the Revelations of Love

By
Dr. Nadhir Al-Azmah

Is Soad El-Sabah afraid of breaking any taboos in exercising her natural right, as a woman, to suffer the 'emotion of love' and to give it powerful expression, just like all poets have done, from time immemorial?

What is the poet Soad Al-Sabah after? The freedom of Self, the freedom of body, or the freedom of both of them? What does the male 'other' represent to this female 'poetic' Self? What does love mean to her? How does she understand 'freedom' and 'words'?

Does love for her imply a fierce erotic urge seeking communion between two bodies, motivated by lust, or a civilized instinct requiring the unison of two souls in a single entity, within which both male and female are united?

Who is that 'other' to whom Soad El-Sabah directs such love – the 'harem' male, emblem of ancient cultures, or modern civilized man? Who is that 'other'; who makes her conscious of her existence and her presence, even if denied? What function do the 'words' fulfil in all this? Is the aesthetic dimension an integral part of love and the erotic passion?

These and other questions are posed by the recent collection of verses entitled *Love Poems*, published by Soad El-Sabah's Publishing House in 1997. We shall not attempt to

suggested. It is the language of the aesthetic extreme arising from the emotional extreme – in the case of love or any other human emotions. In the poems of Soad El-Sabah, poetry yields lines, shapes and thousands of other things that

*Only an Arab woman,*
*Loitering on the pavements of sadness,*
*Can understand.*

**Poem No. 7, p. 102**

and at the same time inspire a rare capacity for creativity, innovation and foregoing the self.

This experience is bound to happen to each and every individual human being at one point or another in his or her life. But what would be the value of this physical and emotional experience if it remained confined to the subjective level? Poetry and language can provide the answer. A poet can export the human experience from the realm of the body and individual emotions to that of language and poetry. In so doing, the poet will be taking this experience to a higher, more refined aesthetic and creative level. Language is so valuable in the sense that is provides an equivalent to the human being's consciousness of the vast scheme of being, and of his or her existence in this scheme. Without language, the whole existence would turn into an inscrutable ambiguity just as valueless as is the universe to dumb beasts. The relationship between language and human consciousness is one of identification, rather than one between tenor and vehicle as some may tend to argue.

Just as the human body has its chemistry, and love has its physical chemistry, so does language. Poetry has its own linguistic 'chemistry.' It is through this web of relationships – between the chemistry of the body and the 'chemistry' of language, the chemistry of the body and that of love, and finally the chemistry of love and that of poetry – that poetry manages to discharge its great function of creating wonderful correlations between the aesthetic consciousness embodied in poems and the developing relationships between the individual and the world and also with him/herself. More importantly, poetry creates new worlds that would not otherwise exist. Poetry is not only the 'dessert of language' as one French critic once

In spite of the passivity suggested by the last line above, which confines the role of the female to that of reception, and reduces her value to doing whatever is possible to deserve the love of her man, the same poem later restores initiative to women, stressing that love is both agency and choice rather than simply responding and reacting:

*The old text of femininity I hereby abjure.*
*I will reinvent my femininity as I want it.*
*I will locate the place of my lips,*
*The colour of my eyes,*
*As I want them.*
*I will take off my tight Chinese shoes*
*off my feet, off my mind.*
*To go with you to the farthest regions of freedom.*

**Poem No. 6, p. 91**

What could be desired or achieved more than freedom? The farthest regions of freedom will enable both man and woman to realize their full humanity in the exercise of their roles and agencies, rather than be confined to an incomplete or distorted function of either masculinity or femininity.

## IX. Conclusion

Love has its special physical chemistry, which overwhelms the human body by its tormenting, tyrannical and densely distilled visitations. It allows one to experience extreme physical and emotional limits of ecstasy, pleasure, pining and yearning. This state is only attainable when this chemistry reaches a certain intensity that allows it to control the humours of the body,

*What counts is what I write.*
*To me, writing is*
*A dialogue, first with myself,*
*Then with you.*

**Poem No. 1, p. 15**

In dealing with the body and issues of femininity, the poet insists on associating all this with the verb "want", suggesting a sense of initiative, as in the following lines from Poem No.3:

*I want to go with you*
*To the farthest limits of unreason,*
*The farthest limits of challenge*
*The farthest limits of my femininity.*

**Poem No. 3, p. 44**

What more than the farthest limits of femininity could a lover ask of a woman? However, in Poem No.6, the poet seems to have gone even beyond this point to explore new vistas and extremities in the eternal relationship between man and woman, represented in this case by the poet's own relationship with poetry and language:

*With you I will get involved*
*To the point of no return.*
*With you I will walk with no umbrella*
*In the rain of scandal.*
*With you I will go*
*To the farthest point in language,*
*To the last drop of my blood,*
*So that I may deserve to be your beloved.*

**Poem No. 6, p. 88**

personae who express their physical sensations and sexual desires unreservedly. This, however, is the exception made by male authors. It is explicit, direct, even vulgar, to a degree that sometimes defeats the aesthetic value of the work. It is also concerned mainly with sexual rather than emotional relationships.

There are obvious differences between Soad El-Sabah's sensuous love poetry and the extreme expressions of sexual desire in the tradition of Arabic poetry. These differences indicate the special value of the El-Sabah's attempt to take love to the farthest physical limits – a dangerous area which most males see only as an object of desire, a source of pleasure and a means of reproduction, or at best the distinctive mark of a merely receptive being who has no agency or initiative.

Many of the poems derive their value from the fact that the female is the one who takes the initiative, rather than the recipient who merely responds as in the beautiful and famous lines of Fadwa Tuqan:

*My love, call me, even from the end*
*Of this earth, and I will respond!*
*Every path that leads to you is my path.*
*My love, you live to call me,*
*I live to answer*
*The call of your love.*

By contrast, El-Sabah announces in the first poem that writing is itself an act of initiation rather than responding. It is an act of discoursing with oneself first before conversing with any 'other':

*Your reply does not count much.*

*To you I owe*
*This diversity of my regions,*
*This sweetness of my fruits.*
*By your hands my femininity is constructed,*
*As a rainbow is formed.*

**Poem No. 2, pp. 31-2**

The apparently subdued tone of these lines is contrasted to the implied sensuous and erotic implications of its metaphors, which portray a seduction bordering on a violent eruption engendered by the contemplation of the topography and 'sweet fruit' of the female body.

The most remarkable form of poetic energy that the poems seem to internalize and then release to the recipient can be found in their violation of the familiar and the readily available – of what is described in one of the poems as "committing an utterance of love." The poems push the frontiers of discourse to the farthest limits of desire in the act of love (by nature a wild and uncalculating passion on every level), which otherwise would be divested of its very essence.

It should be noted here that the cultural traditions of the Arab region are not altogether dismissive of the discourse of love, even in the erotic sense which is largely suppressed or hidden. Extreme expressions of sexual love and sexual relationships – whether heterosexual of homosexual – can be found in the overtly permissive works of several old poets such as Al-Waleed Ibn Al-Yazeed, Bashar Ibn Burd, Abu Nuwas, and unknown poets whose works were conserved in the *Arabian Nights*, in addition to various other literary works and histories. Some of the poems in the *Arabian Nights* and some of those of Bashar Ibn Burd and Abu Nuwas have female

*... to defend every inch of my femininity,*
*to break the unbreakable*
*medieval castles,*
*walls of forbidden cities,*
*and guillotines of the Inquisition.*

**Poem No. 1, p. 21**

These lines refer to the enormous pressure of restrictions imposed by walls, castles and guillotines of the Inquisitions, which in turn indicates the great hazards involved in trying to break these historically fearful barriers. The explosion will necessarily have to be as formidable as the forces of suppression which act to prevent it. As in classical mechanics, the reaction will have to correspond to the action.

Dealing with the bodily taboos in the poems is not only confined to prophesying the inevitability of an explosion in the mechanical sense. Rather, femininity by virtue of the active presence of the lover, grows like a flower, revealing its sensuous side which promises the pleasures of physical consummation:

*My forests grow more leafy,*
*My plateaus become higher,*
*My lips plumper,*
*My hair madder.*
*Your hands*
*Made me, for the first time,*
*Discover the geography of my body,*
*Mound by mound,*
*Brook by brook,*
*Cloud by cloud,*
*Hill by hill.*

The reader of Soad El-Sabah's love poems can easily feel her ability to turn the vocabulary of everyday life and the related numerous details into poetry brimming with pleasant fragrance, with sweetness and beauty. The difference between the two poets is that in the case of Qabbani, this innovation is carefully handled within the established prosodic patterns of Arabic poetry. In the case of El-Sabah, the same effect is created but then through the form of the prose poem. Among other things, we read about "coffee had in Rome cafés, cocks crowing, horses whining, ring bulls panting with breath, bread and olives in a cloth bundle, a spoilt Turkish cat, a woollen muffler worn on the neck, nails being pared, hair being dried, toothpaste being used, broken plates, and French cheese."

Departing from the familiar everyday use of such words is not the only means of investing prose with poetic power. More important, I argue, is the extension of the state of mind expressed by the poem to the farthest possible limit. There is even more to the poems than pushing the psychic and linguistic frontiers: they indicate a keen preoccupation with the topography of the female body, an area that has been a barrel of gunpowder throughout the cultural and social history of the Arab region. This has been the private forbidden area that must remain hidden, buried, or alienated behind thousands of veils and locked doors. But the body which is "booby-trapped with a thousand pounds of the dynamite of desire," as one of the poems describes it, will not remain oppressed and suppressed by these shackles. Its passions and strong desires will explode like fireworks:

*Born as a woman in love,*
*My passion erupts in the face of this world.*

**Poem No. 1, p. 18**

*Against my clashing waves?*

**Poem No. 8, p. 122**

What can one say in response to the female passion which is "booby-trapped with one thousand pounds of dynamite", and reinforced by the explicit proclamation of love three times on the last page: "I love you, I love you, I love you" (Poem No.8, p.124)? How can this wonderful and overwhelming flow of passion be given due credit?

## VIII. Prose Poems and the Internalization of Poetics in Prose

One of the main achievements in the field of contemporary Arabic poetry, in terms of the technical aspects of versification and the superb craftsmanship involved in producing and promoting a poetic sensibility, is the transformation, done most ably by Nizar Qabbani, of the vocabulary of familiar everyday language and hackneyed words into a creative poetic energy in a spectacular and beautiful world. The words are used in a slightly different sense from their normal usage, and invested with a new potential so as to make them participate in the indispensable making of the poem's structure. Qabbani is thus able to create a wonderful new poetic atmosphere for his Arab readers. Things such as daily newspapers and cigarette ashes were turned from worthless disposable objects into essential elements in the contemporary scene of Arabic poetry:

*Here lies his paper neglected in the corner,*
*Here a book that we read together.*
*On the seats are some of his cigarettes,*
*In the crevices some of their ashes.*

the storm, facing the Inquisitions, rupturing a hole in the body of heaven, whining on pages and grinding the earth with one's teeth."

The next poem is full of references to items that constitute the essence, mystery, secrets and hazards of femininity, including "hills that grow higher with love, lips that become plumper, and hair that becomes more air-blown." Poem No. 4 refers to the "beautiful disturbance caused by the male in the female's life." In Poem No. 5 expressions of love are "committed", and involvement becomes irreversible. The poem also refers to a walk with no umbrella in the rain of scandal, and to begetting twenty children just by smelling "the scent of virility."

In Poem No.7, the hands of man are more capable of understanding the nature of women and their secrets than other male concerns: those hands open "a thousand doors for dialogue." In poem No. 8, the discourse of love is crowned with an intriguing female offer; no man can hope to have more:

*I will go to your temple*
*To give my offerings,*
*Burn my incense,*
*And wash your feet with the scent of bitter orange*
...
*I will search for everything*
*That may tempt you to communicate with me*
*And provoke you to court me.*

**Poem No. 8, p. 121**

Like the rest of the poems, this poem ends with a female challenge with which all men are confronted:

*Can you hold out for another year*

requires strength, endurance and stamina. But the aesthetic confession of emotional and physical urges is a fundamentally different thing. To contemplate the possibility of challenging this sweeping current, which preaches taciturnity, reserve and concealment of pain, is itself an act of courage. To translate this impulse into action and to produce an aesthetic discourse addressed to a wide audience is even far more courageous.

A greater amount of courage is required when the discourse originates from the more suppressed, the more hushed party that is forced to remain cocooned and confined to harsh unwieldy forbidding restrictions. It is this party – women – which is denied the right to express emotions or a female desire for their partners, even within the legitimate institution of marriage, or within the framework of everyday life. For this reason, the value of female love poetry in Arabic becomes even greater. It is particularly important when examples of this poetry develop the aesthetic requirements necessary to stand the test of time and become permanently memorable cultural products, capable of reaching a culturally varied audience and communicating to them the possibility of change.

In Soad El-Sabah's *Love Poems*, we read of angry female storms, and the tumult produced by their eruption and raging. We realize her attempt to contribute to the cultural institutionalization of a female love discourse in contemporary Arabic poetry. Most of her structures seem to be strong linguistic eruptions, objective correlatives to emotional eruptions of instinctual urges or desires which have long been suppressed. Since the ultimate eruption is too much to be contained in the depths of the soul, Poem No.1 deals with the necessity of "transcending all boundaries, releasing all the electric overcharge from the body, reading the pulses carried by the arteries, chewing

**VII. Frontiers of Love and Body, and the Heat of Confession**

In a previous study of Soad El-Sabah's poetry entitled *The Poetics of Confession*, I devoted a large part of the paper to what I described as the 'courage of confession' in her discourse on love. It may be argued, however, that confessing the workings of the inner world indicates no courage whatsoever, being as it is a state of obvious weakness in human nature which is not gender-specific, but one which applies to men and women equally.

In the tradition of pre-Islamic poetry, confessing one's true feelings for a woman was considered a kind of androgynous weakness most unbecoming of a perfect male. Al-A'sha was strongly censured for proclaiming in the opening line of his *mu'alaqa* that he could not bear to part with is beloved:

> *Bid farewell to Huraira, for the caravan is about to go,*
> *But can you ever, man, bear the 'farewell' pangs?*

In the tradition of *hadith* (sayings reportedly ascribed to Prophet Muhammad of Islam), people are urged to be cautiously reticent in discharging their personal affairs. In Imam Ali's *Paragon of Rhetoric*, a wise man's heart is said to be the cabinet of his secrets. Other similar exhortations, both historical and contemporary, abound in the Arab tradition and life. Courage, according to this mindset, consists in the suppression of one's pain, however intense, rather than letting out a cry of pain or a cry for help. To Jibran Khalil Jibran, such self-control is the highest level of nobleness: "How noble is the heart that, though grieved, can sing joyfully with other joyful hearts?"

Is it valid to argue that challenging this established tradition is itself a form of courage? It is true that suppressing pain

*To regain my balance.*
*Without you, I am like a sparrow with broken wings,*
*A boat sinking to the deep.*

**Poem No. 5**

All the radiant beauty of Paris as expressed by the poem has turned into the exact opposite – pain and chilling cold, broken wings and a sinking ship. The inner world could only open up to receive and re-shape this flux through distilled layers of pain and annoyance. This feeling is most intensely articulated in Poem No.1, in which the poet views the act of writing as a healing process that may soothe her inner turmoil.

Unless it is forged internally and re-worked emotionally and linguistically into a poetic form, the outer world falls apart and dwindles into nothingness. It fails to sustain the agency entailed by the vistas of love and the joy resulting from its intense presence in any given moment of time. This may happen even if one's beloved or soul mate is literally present. A similar idea was once expressed by Jamil Ibn Mu'ammar who proclaimed that the physical presence of his beloved Buthayna does not count; rather it stifles his love since it overshadows the inner formulation of the image of the beloved and eclipses the increasingly iridescent image ingrained in his heart and consciousness. Once the literal image fades away, the inner image resurges more lustrously on an emotional level, and the poet is, yet again, able to experience that shattering stormy feeling deep within:

*Meeting her, I love no more,*
*But once departed, my flame is rekindled.*

The inner-outer dialectic is best embodied in Poem No.5 which deals with the famous sparkling landmarks of Paris and the elegance of Parisian life: "walking under street lamp-posts, dealing with news agents, visiting public parks, dining at a Champs Elysées restaurant, visiting the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, and L'Invalide where Napoleon was buried, remembering Rimbaud and Aragon, and visiting the Pompidou Centre, or the cafés of the Quartier Latin, etc." The wonderful and beautiful Paris, however, turns into a cold, boring and depressing prison-like place since the inner world of the female is 'locked'. The only way to receive the flux of this glamorous world outside is to have her soul mate (her lover) with her. The absence of this soul mate makes the weekend, even in such a beautiful city as Paris, a particularly painful experience:

*The weekend*
*I spent away from you*
*Has become a dagger slashing my flesh,*
*A headache furrowing my forehead.*

**Poem No. 5, p. 75**

Pain reaches its highest point when the persona feels the contradiction between the outside beauty and the inner resistance of her soul. Not having her soul mate around, she becomes so desperate:

*I feel so lonely in Paris,*
*So painfully lonely,*
*So painfully lost,*
*So painfully missing you ...*
*I want to hide in the bushes of your voice,*
*To spare myself this freezing cold.*
*I want to hang on to your arms*

invested with the power of dreams and a sugary taste recovered from the banks of memory and consciousness:

*It doesn't matter if you don't exist in the flesh,*
*For in my dreams I can much you*
*Like a fruit,*
*Until the walls of my memory overflow with syrup.*

**Poem No. 6, p. 93**

Poem No. 7 is addressed to the 'hands' of the other who literally exists outside the internal world of the poet. Nevertheless, they occupy a stimulating position in her soul; they portray a captivating picture of the outside world – Saint Germain's cafés in Paris, international airports, and morning coffee shops. Those two hands growing on the banks of the inner brooks of the poet are:

*The two thick forests*
*In which I take refuge when I have the blues,*
*The two logs I cling to*
*When I am about to drown,*
*The two fireplaces by which I huddle*
*When I am shaking with cold.*

**Poem No. 7, p. 108**

The final poem ends with references to the rainbow, the language of trees, the language of rain, the language of the blue see, a reference to professional women, and Saint Valentine's Day. Together with other details, all these elements are filtered through the inner world of the poet; they are reshaped and re-worked into a poem that seems to be concerned, only apparently, with certain beautiful aspects of the external world.

In Poem No.3, the coffee aroma characteristic of Rome cafés acquires significance by virtue of their association with the smell of a male figure present in the deep recesses of the female soul, rather than one actually occupying the opposite chair:

*You face reminds me*
*Of the wilderness of my childhood.*
*Your scent*
*Of the coffee aroma of Rome's cafés.*

**Poem No. 3, p. 39**

While the face of the man and the aroma belong to the external world, the act of remembering transports them to the innermost world of the soul from which they emerge saturated with wild childhood memories and earlier aromatic sensations.

Poem No. 4 abounds in minute details of twentieth century life which may be spontaneously mundane and devoid of any aesthetic value, such as "buying Pharaonic amulets, folk trinkets, shaving cream, or toothpaste," acts which acquire a sentimental and aesthetic value by virtue of association with the internal workings of passion.

Poem No. 6, full of external roaming and references to great physical distances, is thus diametrically opposed to the idea of internal being and of poetry issuing from the depths of the soul. Examples of these externalities include "the moan, soaring at an altitude of 32,000 feet, a derailed train, the robe of Antara Ibn Shaddad, tight Chinese shoes, and the Phoenician sailor who has no final destination." These wanderings, however, would have become meaningless had they not been

courageously and explicitly expressing women's love for men, but they are primarily writing beautiful poetry with a momentum that refuses to be tainted by a history of oblique tautology, falsehoods and concealed truths under the yoke of stifling and flagrantly hypocritical tradition and morality.

**VI. Processing of the External World Internally and Poetically**

A study of separate individual *Love Poems* may be useful only on a intermediate and rather simplified level of classroom interpretation. It is more appropriate to this study to deal with the poems in their totality by examining to what extent they meet the criteria of analysis derived from larger frames of reference, namely the entire series of the poems, and the overall body of works of El-Sabah in its dialectic relationship with Arab and foreign poetic experiences, both contemporary and historical.

As far as the question of 'giving' the poem through the poet's consciousness is concerned, that is, roaming the banks of consciousness long before the poem is given an external shape and presented to the external world in its final form, El-Sabah's poems have much to say. As early as the first page, the reader realizes that the external presence of the man / lover is dwarfed by his presence on the deeper level of consciousness:

*I can summon your presence,*
*Even though you are not present.*
*I can touch you*
*Even though you are not with me.*

**Poem No. 1, p. 15**

ness, passive receptivity and the voluntary relinquishing of agency and self-expression as inalienable human traits.

In ancient Greece (about the fifth century BC) the poet Sappho wrote poems that expressed her emotions and desires in the most explicit manner. In the Andalusian era of Arab history, Walladah, the daughter of the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mustakfi, started for the first time in Arab history to exercise the right of women to express their emotions that had long been suppressed by male domination and blood-smeared history, as may be seen in her well-known line:

*To my lover I offer my cheeks.*
*My kiss I give to him who craves for it.*

Neither Sappho nor Walladah belongs to the mainstream of Arab or western cultures. It was not until the mid nineteenth century that there was another woman writer who, like Saphho, expressed female desires so openly. In the case of the Arab literary tradition, none appeared like Walladah until the mid twentieth century.

Soad El-Sabah's *Love Poems* portray the twentieth century women who are willing to belong to the exception rather than the rule, and to tread the mostly untrodden paths. Not only do they want to break the shell in which they have been entrapped by men and denied the right of agency in general, and cultural agency in particular, but they are also keen on eliminating the larger constraints, and unlocking the sacrosanct closet of forbidden taboos. They want to proceed along the path of earlier women who aspired to the heights of exceptionality, rather than the easily tractable ways of the mob. In so doing, they are not simply speaking up, 'swimming against the tide', or

through an appropriate aesthetic vehicle which has the essential qualities of art. Otherwise, any novelty would be likely to be unduly immortalized.

In the three introductory parts above, my argument has been that the value of the *Love Poems* derives partly from the comprehensive standards of evaluation discussed in these parts. To the extent that they adhere to these standards, the poems can be seen to be of high or low value. This arbitrary measure, however, defies the logic of both poetic appreciation and the critical enterprise. The standards of poetic value are not uniform everywhere. They may not be imported to the literary text or imposed externally. The above introductions, at the outset of this critical appraisal of the poems, are themselves derived from the *Love Poems* and from the conclusions of my study of Soad El-Sabah's poetry and the larger contexts of Arab and foreign poetry.

**V. Walladah and Sappho**

The cultural history of the Arabs is rich in the so-called "courtship poetry," which was defined by our ancestors as the praise of women's beauty as a means of wooing them and winning their favour. Obviously, this definition denies women a right to the counterpart act of this male practice, and deprives them of the possibility of expressing their feelings and emotions towards the other party. The Arab literary tradition has no small number of women poets who shunned every mention of their lovers, thus consolidating the idea that demureness, emotional reticence and passive receptivity are biologically innate in women's nature. But in fact, human nature in the case of man and woman alike is fundamentally opposed to inward-

following the example of installation art works. The absence of titles is doubly significant. It is reminiscent of the traditional title-less Arabic poetry, and at the same time it spares the recipient the risk of approaching the poem's world from a particular perspective dictated by the title. Arguably, a poem's title may pre-condition the recipient and impose a single vision on his or her consciousness. He or she, therefore, becomes more likely to deal with the poem or the world it opens into in the light of the associations triggered by that title.

The poems belong to that kind of writing which seeks to formulate the eternal discourse of mutual love between men and women ever since the emotion was culturally and aesthetically constructed. In this context, the poems, naturally, recreate old traditions or follow the paths of the ancestors. But before proceeding to a full discussion of this point, it is important to note that poets have been cautioned against repetitiveness and redundancy since the earliest days of the Arabic poetic tradition, as may be found in the following line by the *jahiliyya* poet Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulma:

*I only hear ideas repeated,*
*Words echoed and reiterated.*

Are Soad El-Sabah's *Love Poems* repetitive?

To answer this question, it may be useful to remember that all expressions of love in every culture are, so to speak, "variations on the same theme of love." Only those expressions characterized by originality and survivability have been immortalized by their respective cultures. Individuality and originality, however, do not by themselves guarantee the immortality of a work of art. They have to be conveyed

rent insistence on following the poetic forms of *jahiliyya* may, therefore, be seen as an indubitable call for smothering innovation, and restricting the creative impulse even in potential terms. To suppress creativity and make it illegitimate in any field is to suffocate it everywhere as a principle. This attitude turns the works of the old masters into an ultimate criterion that is sacred and inapproachable, even on a purely intellectual level.

It is therefore legitimate to view departures from, and deconstructions of, old poetic forms as a necessary prelude to the development of new forms, patterns and values. It should be stressed, however, that the mere act of deconstruction is worthless unless it be a step to further construction or a prelude to a new kind of innovation.

**IV. Soad El-Sabah's *Love Poems***

Soad El-Sabah's collection of *Love Poems* includes eight prose poems dealing with a single subject, namely love as the rubric of innumerable human emotions which grow in different directions, including love for other humans, love of goodness, nature, children, one's own country and everything else. The feeling of love varies, naturally, in intensity. It may start with an absence of unfamiliarity and aversion, and then develops into amiability and intimacy until it becomes an overwhelming passion that leads to the ultimate dissolution of the soul of the loving subject into that of the beloved.

Because El-Sabah's poems deal with the same subject, love, they have no individual titles, only numbers like the famous *Pains* collection of Mohammed Nadeem, probably

the linguistic/poetic code to inform all these spaces. Prose, as Dr. Kamal Abu Deeb has put it, becomes endowed with a rich poetic potential when it is objectified in a specific all-inclusive structure.

The case against this view, which objects to the absence of metre and rhyme in the prose poem, may be refuted by the fact that rhyme and metre alone do not make poetry. The one-thousand line poem, Malik's *Alfiyya*, establishing the rules of Arabic grammar as well as myriads of similar compositions, attest to this fact. Prosody, external music and rhyme are only a few of many elements that have to combine if an utterance is to be labelled poetic. Writing in a single metre and using a fixed rhyme throughout the poem as identified by Al-Khalil are only two of the main features of the basic fifteen – later sixteen – prosodic structures of most, but not all, Arabic poetry. Deviations from these set structures, which reached a height in the *muwashahat* of Andalusia, were dismissed from the established corpus of Arabic poetry when it was first canonized.

Old forms, however, are not violated simply because of new changes which dictate the development of innovative forms to correspond to these changes. More importantly, from the point of view of Russian Formalism, the old forms in time are bound to become obsolete and worn out.

The ancestors of the Arabs who lived in the pre-Islamic age, *jahiliyya*, masterfully set wonderful typical forms within which to cast their creative and emotional experiences - a feat in its own right indeed. The possibility of developing new forms, however, remained always open. Later generations had the freedom to develop other more appropriate forms, as may be exemplified by the Andalusian *muwashahat*. The cur-

is Ibn Malik's *Alfiyya* (the one-thousand line poem) which includes and elucidates the rules of Arabic grammar in a metric and rhymed form. Kamal Abu Deeb's *Poetics* is a thorough and adept examination of this particular idea. In this book, Abu Deeb argues that the Quran itself was first received by its earliest audience as poetry, which suggests that the Arabs in the pre-Islamic age (*jahiliyya*) had such a wide and sophisticated understanding of poetry which transcended the straightjacketed concept of the "rhymed and metric utterance."

To some, the concept of poetry has been extended to incorporate any case of everyday metaphoric use of language. For some time now, new terms such as 'the poetics of film', 'visual poetics', 'the poetic novel or situation', have been repeatedly circulated in the Arab and world critical milieus. These terms tend to push the concept poetry to extremely fluid and indeterminate frontiers. Contemporary poets now tend to believe that no inanimate nature, act, natural scene or idea exists outside poetry, as Roman Jacobson has argued in his *Issues of Poetics*. Paul Valerie, Tzvetan Todorov argues in his *Introduction to Poetics,* finds it necessary to turn to the morphology of the word 'poetics' if one is to understand what it precisely means. Valerie made it a label for everything that has to do with writing, since language is both the content and the medium.

Expanding or narrowing the concept of poetics is irrelevant to a study of the so-called 'prose poems'. What counts is to decide the legitimacy of incorporating the prose poem in the larger poetic category. Such incorporation would require the 'prose poem' to have essential poetic characteristics, including, in particular, the ability of the prosaic expression to internalize enough emotional power, distilled feelings, a capacity to impress the consciousness of the recipient, and the ability of

us has, deep within, amazing potentials for creativity. But it is the creative artist alone – in this case the poet – who alone can externalize such potentials, it is the poet alone who can help the inner seed to grow and develop. We all read literature and poetry for a variety of reasons, the most important of which is that in literature, and in poetry, particularly, we see the realization of the hidden potential in a beautiful and lofty form. It is the poet who can bring out whatever is latent within, the 'hidden potential', in a much better form than we may ever hope to do ourselves. It is natural, of course, that 'things' are always 'decided' internally – 'covertly', as Ibn Arabi says:

*Each state is decided internally,*
*Making appearance outweigh latency.*

The latent cannot realize its value, however, until it has appeared and is seen to be explicitly present. Accordingly, every good love poem must represent a wonderful 'crossing over' from the state of latency to that of explicitness – and appearance.

**III. The Poetics of Prose**

The traditional definition of poetry as "rhymed and metric utterance" remains widely accepted in the Arab region today. While this definition dismisses everything that falls under the rubric of free verse, meter-based versification or the prose (prosaic) poem as un-poetic, it encompasses as poetic everything that is cast in a metric form which may, nevertheless, be totally lacking in artistic or aesthetic value. A case in point

act of resistance in which all human beings are involved, both men and women, even without being directly conscious that they are resisting 'mortality'. Within such resistance love is not confined to the parties *in love*; it covers the provision of a different kind of love, naturally, to the new born infants.

Every expression of love, or act of love, must be seen as an integral part of the construction of the entire future of the human race. However, spontaneous expressions of love and the daily repeated acts of love at the level of humanity at large, are essentially different from the artistic or philosophic expressions of love. To be more specific, what literature has achieved and philosophy later formulated within the general framework of expressing love, has been to humanize love. It has thus acquired its cultural nature which helped it to transcend the purely animal dimension: it has transformed the practice of love into a lofty, human and cultural practice. In his thesis on the evolution of languages, J. J. Rouseau claims that language was originally born primarily to express human emotions, foremost among which was love, rather than to express needs or to serve mutual interests. Every new artistic expression of love is, therefore, a new contribution to the edifice of human culture. Indeed, it may even be regarded as a more important contribution to the deepening of man's humanity which is being threatened, at the outset of the third Millennium, by horrible acts of regression to man's brutal animal dimensions – when the lust for blood seems dominant, and man is possessed with the desire to invade and prey on others.

There is no doubt that all people possess the potential of producing beautiful, artistically-formulated expressions of love: perhaps there is a potential artist, writer or philosopher in each one of us. There can be no doubt, either, that each one of

emotional, is to reduce the value of love: it should disturb its pure nature, detract from its essential quality as love, and turn it into a transaction – an exchange of interests, as mentioned in Simone de Beauvoir's novel *L'invitée.* The French philosopher believes that 'to love' must mean to love the 'other' for himself or herself, regardless of *who* that 'other' may be, and without expecting anything in return. If, as has been mentioned, anything is expected in return, even if purely emotional, the emotion would be reversed: from a love for the 'other' to self-love. This obviously destroys the act of loving and turns it into an act of egoism.

Centuries ago, in fact, this sense was established by the great Myhyiddin Ibn Arabi, it was he who first helped to rid love of the shackles of egoism and self-centeredness. He defined it as the extreme dissolution of the self into the beloved, stating that 'any passion that is satisfied by a meeting with the beloved is worthless; and any love that does not help you forego yourself is worthless'.

Love is the highest emotion, too, because of its association with the essence of life, the survival of mankind. It is love that leads to reproduction, hence to human survival, as expressed by the Inn woman in *Gilgamesh*, the great epic. That simple woman was able to sum up the significance of survival and the idea of immortality inherent in the act of love and reproduction. In the epic, the God/King had lost the 'immortality weed' which he had brought back from the world of eternity, and was able through love to conquer his despair of immortality and regain the ability to resist mortality and death itself.

As the only means of resisting mortality available to man, love must be regarded as a necessity rather than lust. It is an

tilled and emblematized. This is what Ibn Arabi had in mind when he thus addressed man:

You claim to be a puny thing,
But within you lies the greater being.

## II. The Special Value of Love Poetry

Some people believe that the entire corpus of love poetry that the genius of man has produced down the centuries, everywhere and in all cultures, is simply designed to transmit a 'wooing' message from one party to the other in the eternal male-female duality – a message which may be summed up in the simple "I love you". The fact that there is an astounding variety in the love poems and love stories, as well as in the means of conveying that message in human culture, indicates otherwise. Indeed, this fact points right in the opposite direction; so much so that, there may be, in effect, as many means of expressing love and as many ways of formulating the love message as there are successful or potential senders of love messages everywhere and at all times.

Risking a platitude, we should refer to the higher position occupied by love among all human emotions. It is the highest because it involves, among other things, the ultimate acceptance of the 'other', with all that this entails in terms of willingness to sacrifice a great deal for the 'other' as well as putting him or her before oneself. In its purest form, love involves an act of giving, where the 'giver' expects nothing in return. To expect anything in return, even if it were purely

they cause 'fissures', 'trenches' and 'dents' of varying depths and steepness. They produce structures which are either 'temporary' or 'permanent up to a point' but which are all newly formed. The inner life is ultimately crowded over with a multitude of tremors, tensions and storms that have a double value. By 'double' is meant that to the outside storms are added the storms they have engendered within the creative mind.

Hence the seriousness of 'wandering' about in the land of such storms; for it is the interrelation between the inner and outer that gives an exceptional value to the serious roaming in the doubly serious realm. Needless to say, the best and most beautiful verse is that which results from a deeper plunging into the depths of man, and a wider wandering in the same world. Whenever poetry succeeds in getting through to the deeper and darker strata of the human psyche, it will be able to come up with whatever is rare, precious and unique within. The vaster the inner space within which verse may roam, the more varied will be the 'fruit' of poetry, with the notion of abundance and affluence more fully realized.

It is a commonplace that there is so much Arabic and foreign verse (both contemporary and historical) that only deals with the outside world, with its innumerable issues. It is equally a commonplace that this kind of verse lacks warmth and truthfulness: it fails to affect the recipient, and lacks any real appellative power. A poem that is 'culled' directly from the outside world, that is, which is directly 'given' before going through the poet's consciousness, is less 'valuable' than that which acquires its fragrance from the flowers that grow on the banks of consciousness, whether it belongs to the inner or outer worlds. Within the human psyche, the outside world, with all its unimaginable vastness, richness and variety, is dis-

characteristic of those working in politics, in the legal, medical and health professions, as well as those working within the realm of basic and applied science. On the other hand, inward growth is characteristic, primarily, of artists – writers, poets, musicians, painters and dramatists. It is to be found, too, in moralists and mystics. Philosophy may be singled out, followed by criticism, as exceptionally capable of establishing a putative, conceptual balance in the strength and degree of growth between the two available 'growth directions'.

It may only be too obvious that the Arabic language has a distinctive ability to create the right milieu for the poet. It enables him to roam with the greatest possible freedom, to the greatest possible distances, and to unfathomable depths in his or her inner world, even as he or she continues to negotiate the paths of the intractable outer world. He or she will find that such paths are reflected, and indeed ingrained in the very cells of his being, and in the depths of consciousness. A poem should thus come out in flashes – be they sparks of lightning or steady light from the hinterland of his or her consciousness.

Poetry is largely a fathoming up of the human psyche. It is an introspective effort seeking whatever lies hidden within, carried there by the tumultuous 'storms' of the outside world. Such 'storms' are not necessarily stilled in the soul, but they do suffer a sea change within the psyche, inevitably differing in character from one person to another. Poetry represents a unique and serious set of 'roaming' (and may be claimed to be very serious indeed) among storms which are characterized by their double power and double tension. From a poetic point of view, what takes place outside the soul will be worthless until it has re-established itself in the creative mind of the poet. Extreme 'storms' influence the inner life of the poet;

# Love Poetry
## Between Emotional and Aesthetic Extremes

By
Salah Salih, Ph.D.
The University of Kuwait

### I. The Banks of Consciousness: The Inner / Outer Dialectic

Every human being has two worlds in which (and through which) to live – the outer and the inner. The outer world includes his or her physical surroundings – things, persons, spaces, events and everything that constitutes the *world*. The inner consists of how that *world* is reflected and reshaped, both as a whole and in the minutest details, within the soul. It is remade and recreated in an interminable series of interactions between all that takes place outside the soul and the individual 'nature' of each being separately. According to this simple 'reading', rudimentary as it is, of man and environment, it is impossible for any person to live solely in the outer or inner world. Everyone is capable by his or her human nature to live in both worlds at once, though the existence of the two worlds entails two ways in which a human personality may grow – either towards the outer or the inner.

Personalities vary in the way one direction of growth becomes dominant and the acceleration of that growth. According to the traditional academic concept of 'mental health', a personality growing in the direction of the outer world is often

*ernist artistic techniques (diction, imagery etc.) employed in the poems and the prominence given to form in them without sacrificing content. The strategy of al-Sabah, Faddul explains, is to get rid of the traditional definition of femininity and of womanhood and to create her alternative definition. She hopes to carry out her project together with a new Arab man, a product of her dreams. Dr. Faddul concludes that the poems of al-Sabah "display a feminist position through a poetic form (imagery, rhythm, etc.) and a poetic language that are typically feminine (the language of a female body, senses, instincts). The unconscious of the poet reveals itself through imagistic techniques (metaphors, metonymys, etc.) that condense and displace (Freud's terms) the repressed and that defamiliarize the experiences making them more interesting to read and share."*

*logical in a harmonious poetic texture wherein the female is made to feel fully equal with the male 'other'."*

*The third reading is by Dr. Paul Jahshan who conducts a post-structuralist analysis of al-Sabah's poems. He argues that the poet's strategy is to invert the traditional male handling of voice and to create an amorous language which through monologism (single voice) achieves a narcisstic quality where the beloved male is represented as artistically absent, a virtual muse in woman's space of writing, allegorized in another virtual western city, Paris. Jahshan benefits from the works of prominent western critics (Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtine) in developing his argument. He explains that al-Sabah "sacrifices the male on the pyre of her amorous discourse and offers him in order for her voice to be heard." Jahshan further explains that Paris is a female space of writing that the poet constructs to achieve her artistic purposes. The conclusion Jahshan reaches is that al-Sabah has been able "not only to produce a genuine female voice where man is a necessary but virtual trace, but also to create, by the same token, a space of writing where a female amorous discourse can, after centuries of silence, be represented and ultimately uttered."*

*The last reading is by Dr. Atif Faddul. Dr. Faddul benefits from several recent critical theories and approaches to provide a close comprehensive reading of al-Sabah's poems that accounts for the paradoxical attitudes towards man in them. He also relates the poems to the prose introduction of the writer, highlighting the feminist attitudes and stands in both and benefiting from the work of several prominent feminist critics in his analysis. Dr. Faddul dwells as well on the mod-*

## *Preface*

*The achievements of Dr. Souad al-Sabah as a unique poetic voice in contemporary Arabic poetry have been acknowledged by critics who approached the several books of poetry she published. However, the contribution of Dr. al-Sabah to Arabic love poetry has attracted the greatest attention of these critics and received their highest appreciation. This volume presents four different readings of one of al-Sabah's books of love poetry, **Qasa'id hubb** by four prominent Arab scholars. The first reading is by Dr. Salah Salih who places the poems in the book within the tradition of love poetry, both Arab and international, highlighting their distinctive artistic characteristics. Salih considers that the poet's departure from and deconstruction of old poetic forms as a necessary prelude to the development of new forms, patterns and values. He also deals with the inner-outer dialectic in al-Sabah's poems and how she forges internally and reworks emotionally and linguistically the outer world into a poetic form. Al-Sabah's love poetry, Salih explains, is an attempt to contribute to the cultural institutionalization of a female love discourse in contemporary Arabic poetry.*

*The second reading is by Dr. Nadhir al-Azmah who considers that writing for Souad al-Sabah is a means of achieving freedom and identity in harmony with and in the presence of the male 'other'. Her aim is to accomplish equal rights in liberty, life, love and writing for both men and women. Al-Azmah concludes that "the tenor of the whole collection may be summed up as the combination of the erotic with the ideo-*

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# ḲAṢĀʾID ḤOBB

*by*

## *Suʿād al-Ṣabāḥ*

*Critical Studies in Arabic & English*

BY
DR. NAD̲H̲ĪR AL-AẒMAH, DR. ṢALĀḤ ṢĀLIḤ
DR. ʿĀṬIF FAḌḌUL & DR. PAUL JAHSHĀN



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